



THE KEYIS OF MALABAR

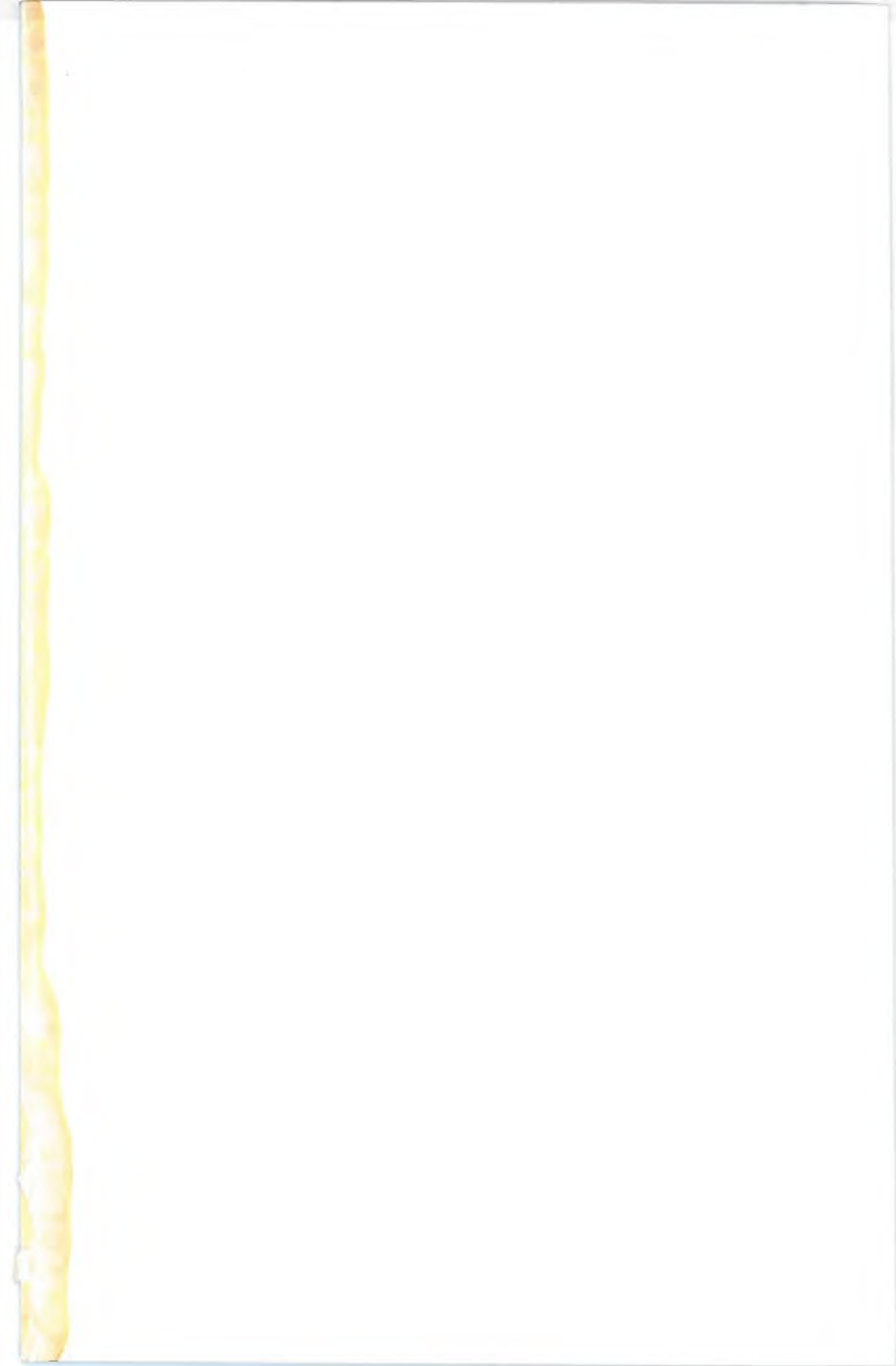
a cultural study



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Malabar Institute for Research and Development
Vatakara, Calicut



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A CULTURAL STUDY

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PREFACE

The Keyis of Malabar, a prominent trading and landed house, had an unknown beginning in the latter half of the 17th century in the English settlement at Tellicherry. The founder and ancestor of the house one Aluppy Kakka, from his native village of Chovva, near Kannur migrated to Tellicherry with his sisters and nephews in search of fortune and wealth as a petty trader. Tellicherry as a factory and settlement was a commercial and trading centre of the English East India Company since its origin in 1683 amidst the land of spices and much valuable commodities. The factory had already introduced a new system of trade based on contracts and agreements and also facilitated the supply of capital as advance payments. Infact, the frequent wars and rivalries among the native chieftains always disturbed peace, law and order among the natives on various pretexts.

In 1766, the invasion of Haidar Ali of Malabar against the principalities like Chirakkal, Kottayam, Kadathanad and Calicut further worsened the situation in Malabar. Most probably the migration of Chovvakkaran (a resident of chovva as shown in the

Factory records). Aluppy Kakka must have taken place in this context of political instability in his native principality of Chirakkal . Further the facilities for maritime trade and commerce were not much available in his native place. The merchants from Tellicherry had direct contacts with him to procure spices and other commodities for the English.

In such a situation, if he had decided to settle at Tellicherry along with his family, it may not be a surprise at all for his fellow trading community. Like every new comer and uprooted family he had to face difficulties, particularly from his co-religionists. But he could see that his trade was expanding under the patronage of the Factory. His nephew Moossa Kakka who passed away in 1807 made the house one of the affluent trading families of the western coast. He was so proud to say "our Company" and really benefited by its monopoly contracts. But gradually the colonial policy of the Company reduced the maritime and coastal trade activities of the house.

The later generations of the house invested their merchant capital in land holdings in different parts of Malabar and South Kanara. This withdrawal from trade made the house as a landed aristocracy in the feudalistic socio-economic pattern of Malabar. As owners of vessels and warehouses they were addressed as 'Keyis' or masters by their labourers and others. Gradually the honorific title 'Keyis' were used by the members of the family.

The house followed Marumakkathayam or matrilineal system, though it was against the law of *Shariyat*. The ruling principality of the Arakkal house of the Ali Rajas of Kannur and may other Muslim

landed families in Malabar practiced this custom of inheritance of the land.

The beginnings of the history of the Keyis had been much related to the history of the Tellicherry Factory. In fact the capital of the Company was responsible to promote this house into an affluent trading house. Later the Company itself assumed the role of trade and commerce and that led to the decline of this house also. But their investments in land holdings and warehouses made them an affluent landed family. Although there were facilities for the development of a professional group in the latter half of the 19th century they did not go for it like many rich Nayar families in Malabar. In the twentieth century, some sections of the house went for law and other professions. However a powerful professional group or industrial group had not come from this affluent house due to several cultural and religious factors. They could not even go for capitalist farming like plantations. This situation still represents the economic backwardness of the region.

The Keyis, now consist of several branches and families and remain as a cultural unit in the Islamic community of Kerala. Their constant relationship with the ruling class of the British through several decades made them much progressive and forward looking. Its members had significant contributions to the contemporary politics of Malabar. Many of them had joined the Indian National Congress, Indian Union Muslim League and Communist Party of India.

This study has its own limitations. There are only scattered references relating to the house in the Tellicherry Factory records.

There are no proper family records and accounts. However the available sources have been utilised for the preparation of this work. It is first time that the history of a trading house in the context of East India Company in Malabar is written.

We sincerely acknowledge and record our gratitude to Mr. C. P. Aluppy Keyi, who has taken keen interest for making this venture fruitful. He has supplied valuable materials including some documents and photographs to this monograph to prepare and publish this volume before a larger audience who take interest in the study of English factories and their impact on trading communities in India. Our thanks are also due to Adv. P. V. Zainudin and Mr. V. P. Mohemmed Keyi for their cordial co-operation. Particular thanks are accordingly owed to The Keyis of Malabar Trust, Tellicherry, for the partial financial assistance rendered to us for the publication of this volume. We thank Mrs.Rejani of Sreevas Computers, Vatakara, Calicut, for the DTP work done in the given time.

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Chapter One

THE TELLICHERY FACTORY

British colonial expansion in the first half of the eighteenth century in India was not a matter of preconceived pattern adopted by the authorities in England. Being a commercial enterprise the immediate aim of the Company in this period was to make it a profitable concern and to exploit the East Indies for the benefit of its own share holders. But even during the factory period, the business of the Company was not merely trade, but a mixture of trade, diplomacy and war.

As the English Company had to contest with other European companies in India who had the same motives, it desired a monopoly of trade especially in spices. This commercial rivalry was very severe in Malabar so that the Dutch, the French and the English struggled to outwit each other in diplomacy and strategy. As early as 1611, the traders of the English Company had established trade relations with Malabar coast. As Malabar was an abundant home of spices and the Malabar spices fetched the highest price in the market, the English Company established a factory at Tellicherry by 1683. The very establishment of the factory at Tellicherry reveals its commercial

rivalry towards the French and the Dutch. On account of this rivalry the policy of the English Factory in Malabar was based on trade monopoly and financial assistance to the native chiefs and territorial acquisition through agreements and diplomacy. Without conducting a major battle against anyone of the native chieftains in Malabar, the Company succeeded to project its influence and authority in Malabar.

The occupation of Chetway by the Dutch, being ceded by Zamorin of Calicut, proved very inconvenient to the private trade in Bengal opium by the English in that area¹. Therefore instead of a direct confrontation with the Dutch, the shrewd diplomacy of Robert Adams, the chief for the English trade on the Malabar coast, encouraged the Zamorin to recover the ceded territory by promising huge financial assistance. Besides money, Adams supplied munitions and other war materials and even sent provisions under cover of the English flag. For this timely assistance the English were permitted "to build a warehouse at Chetway keep a person there, buy pepper and trade"². The warehouse immediately erected by the English in order to secure the pepper trade was destroyed by the Dutch when Chetway was retaken by them. However the English assistance was fully recognised by the Zamorin and on several articles of trade the English were exempted from paying custom duties. The English found that supply of war materials was a profitable branch of trade, while it was a good policy to injure a trade rival and secure the favour of a native chief. As a result of this policy of financial assistance and supply of military stores the Zamorin was considerably indebted to the English Company³.

Kurungot Nair, one local chief at Tellicherry was in hostility against the English which ended by a treaty in which he admitted. "At Punole and other places belonging to me, if any one save the Honourable Company, buy pepper to deal in you can seize and take (it). On the pepper which the Honourable Company may buy and convey from my country, no duty need be paid"⁴. This agreement envisaged a policy of monopoly of the trade in pepper along with the exemption from the local duty. As the French Company was also negotiating for a factory at Mahe (near Tellicherry) since 1718, the English were more anxious to safeguard their trading rights through mutual agreements. To withstand the competition of the French, the English further negotiated for trade privileges with Kolathiri, the king of Kolathunad. The royal grant given by him to the English denied the trading right of others save the privileges already granted to the Dutch Company in Kolathunad⁵. **The Real Escripto** stated: "If any other European or any other stranger came to this country, the English Company can in our name, punish, prevent and drive away". The English knew that such a grant from a king whose authority was increasingly circumscribed by power of the junior and collateral princes would not serve their purpose. So they obtained another confirmation of these privileges from the prince regent and governors of two branch palaces Udayam and Pally also⁶. In the following year the English obtained another grant from the Southern Regent of Kadathanad, the hereditary governor of Kolathunad, excluding all other Europeans from the trade in pepper and cardamom⁷. The agreement of Kolathiri granted the English Company some kind of political responsibility "to punish" to prevent, to drive away" other

interested foreigners from the trade except the Dutch. In Kadathanad the southern regent granted complete monopoly of pepper trade with effect from January 1726. These attempts to monopolise the pepper trade was the first stage of the growth of the factory into a political power in Malabar.

But these endeavours for monopoly were interrupted by other profit seekers as the Company had no machinery or political power to enforce it. When the French factory at Mahe offered a higher price for pepper it was often smuggled to their warehouse and even native chiefs were not free from the desire to do so. Therefore it became a necessity for the English to keep down the price of pepper by a mutual agreement with the French at Mahe. The agreement between them admitted : "We for the benefit of each other, do agree, from time to time to settle the price of pepper as often as is necessary and neither can break the price of pepper as often is necessary and neither can break the price without advising the other, nor yet raise it without the other's knowledge. However the Dutch commercial activities continued as a strong competition to the English.

The further expansion of the factory was based on the policy of substantial financial assistance to the native rulers which had been simultaneously adopted with the acquisition of monopoly of trade through agreements. The political atmosphere was also much favourable to the English as there was a tussle between the Kolathiries and the Ali Rajas of Cannanore in which the former requested the assistance of Somasekhara Nayak II of Ikkeri, the ruler of Bednur, to subdue the latter. These military affairs created

an urgent need of money and military stores to the prince regent. At first the English rejected his request for assistance as he was already indebted to the Company. Then he requested through the Raja of Cochin for the Dutch help. His intention was to hand over the Island of Darmapattanam to the Dutch which would be detrimental to the English trade. The English feared that it would bring the Dutch ascendancy very close to their factory and decided to help the prince regent. The members of the board of Tellicherry factory delivered the chief of the factory their assent in writing to the proposals made by him to the prince⁸. The prince who met the chief at English Fort at Moylan granted in his own handwriting several privileges to the English⁹. This grant denied the right of trade or establishment to the Dutch and the French in the pepper territories like Iruvanadu and Randattara. The English were also given the right to hoist their national flag in these places if encroached by other Europeans. For these concessions the English Company offered an amount of 20,000 fanams in military stores and a further amount of 30,000 fanams in ready money without interest. This was a master stroke of diplomacy played by Braddyl, the English chief, that alienated the other Europeans from the competition of trade.

Within a couple of months the Siddi pirates appeared on the coast with an idea of assisting the Moplahs. Again the financial difficulties clouded over the prince who requested the English assistance. The English found "that we cannot possibly hereafter have any opportunity like this to fix him (prince) in our Honourable Master's interest" and granted him an additional loan of Rs.2,000/- (Two thousand only).

The financial assistance of this kind was made with a view to establish trade monopoly and other concessions in Kolathunad and to prevent the establishment of the French and the Dutch ascendancy. The policy of territorial acquisition was facilitated by the internal political chaos in this period created by the Canarese invasion. The Canarese who came as the allies of the regent of Kolathunad Prince invaded the northern portion of Kolathunad in 1732. An agreement with the prince made them the sovereign masters of the north of the river Baliapatam and made the prince a mere tributary of Bendur in this area. The fortified peninsula of Matame belonging to the Moplahs was taken by them which was feared by the English as it would render the Canarese the masters of Baliapatam river and the country "even as far as Tellicherry since no opposition was made against the prince and his treacherous subjects". In this situation the request of Ali Raja for the supply of military stores was rejected by the English. The English feared that such an action would invite the enmity of both the prince and the Canarese. But when the Canarese entered in Randattara they found that "the stay of the Canarese in these part is absolutely opposite to the interest of both our companies" (i.e. English and French companies). Therefore the English decided to supply great shots (Cannon balls) to the heiress of Ali Raja to withstand the joint invasion. This change of policy was a matter of existence. They felt, "it is obvious that Cannanore was the only barrier that could withstand the Canarese; none of the other powers of this country had provided in any wise for their defence against so powerful an enemy"¹⁰. However the English had no courage to make an open assistance of Ali Raja. So they sent the military stores on the board of a ship

'Campton' so that they could make an excuse that the commander spared them without their knowledge.

For this assistance, the English obtained some concessions from the Beebi and secured a firm hold of grove island lying off the point of Dharmapatam on 5 October 1734 and admitted a small garrison of 25 there along with the Beebi's men¹¹. As early as 1731, the English negotiated with the prince for the possession of Darmapatam. The President of the Council of Bombay even allotted an amount of fifty thousand fanams for its purchase. This amount seemed 'infallibly disgusting' to the highness of Kolathunad and therefore the factors requested for fresh orders from the Bombay Council. These proceedings were prolonging and others were in the meantime trying to possess the Island either by diplomacy or by force. So the possession of grove island had considerable strategical importance. The English promised the Beebi that they would withdraw the garrison when all apprehensions would cease. This could be treated as the first attempt of the factory of territorial expansion through diplomacy supported by the military force. The sergeant of the garrison was reminded : "Endeavour rather to cultivate a good harmony and understanding with them (Moplahs) as they are equally concerned in supporting the peace against all people whatever"¹². Stephen Law, the chief who was a diplomat like Robert Adams sent a letter to the Raja of Kottayam clarifying their position on grove island. He stated the intention of the English was 'to prevent the Canarese settling on Darmapatam'¹³.

Negotiations were then made by the English with the Beebi of Cannanore to obtain permission for the possession of Dramapatam.

Domingo Rodrigus, the linguist, promised: "Should we take place off the hands and power of princes of Pallicullothu and Cotiota, we would deliver it over to her that she will have her place and we will be delivered of a possible anxieties and inconveniences"¹⁴. On the basis of this discussion of Darmapatam was permitted to the English by the Beebi. But the English had to strike further strokes of diplomacy for its possession. By February 1735, the Canarese army under General Gopaljee had pitched their camp at Darmapatam. The General wrote to the English that the Island would be the property of the Company as he had only intended to invade the territory of Kottayam. After this the Company immediately arranged for the absolute possession of the Island from the prince. The royal writ of the prince with his 'good will and pleasure' transferred the absolute right of the Island to the Company and the document was dated in the month of May 1734, although actually executed on 24 February 1735. This was deliberately made to substantiate their possession as early as in 1734 even prior to the grant obtained from the Beebi of Cannanore and thus to deceive her from its restoration. Before obtaining this title of possession the English obtained permission from the king of Kottayam to hoist their colour, to possess and to fortify the Island to safeguard it from the Canarese intervention. So by strategy and diplomacy the English executed their policy of territorial expansion in Malabar by fishing in the troubled waters.

The French at Mahe chalked out a confederacy for expelling the Canarese with Bayanore of Badagara, Kottayam, English and the prince. But such a confederacy was not acceptable to the English

as they desired the exclusion of the French from such attempts. To keep temporary friendship with the Canarese the English even granted one thousand bales of rice on credit as they had no sufficient supplies. Even then they were planning to expel them from Malabar. The English records stated: "When we are actually contriving their overthrow, saviours of the greatest treachery and deceit, but humane policies are not always governed by open and fair dealings"¹⁵. The possession of the Island was considered as major success of the Factory and the chief reported to Bombay:

The situation of this Island by being in the centre of the pepper countries, surrounded with rivers which afford a proper conveyance, for bringing it promises a better security to the trade, than any other place, exclusive of the advantages that may be made through its becoming the immediate property of our Honourable Masters, and encouraging a resort to people to settle there who in all times may be useful in defending it¹⁶.

While exploiting the political situation in Malabar, the factory was trying to expand its political functions over Kolathunad. Permission to erect fortresses at Madacara and Edakkat was granted to the English by the prince. They recruited more sepoy for the garrisons as the trade had to be safeguarded by force. Simultaneously attempts were made by the English to reconcile with the Canarese interests in Malabar in a treaty of 1737 executed with their Governor at Mangalore¹⁷. According to this English not to assist the enemies of King of Bednur and reciprocally Canarese agreed to protect the English privileges in Kolathunad if it was conquered by the Canarese. This treaty reveals the factory adopting the

principles of power politics, giving up their old friend for a new one, sacrificing all political ethics. But the English friendship was not perpetual to any one of the chiefs of Malabar including Bednur. Even the factory authorities accepted a sum of Rupees Thirty thousand from the prince of Kolathunad to make war against the insolence of Canara and to drive away them from Malabar¹⁸.

During the first half of 18th century the growth of Tellicherry factory was formulated by these policies of monopoly of pepper trade, financial assistance and territorial acquisition. No perpetual friendship was observed with anybody, but self interest was given priority. The officials of the factory had confessed already that 'humane policies were not always governed by open and fair dealings.' To substantiate their claims and rights they even manipulated date of documents as they did for the possession of Darmapatam Island. Their major interest of this period was to prevent the French and the Dutch ascendancy in Malabar. Their policy with native chiefs was guided by this motive. To a certain extent they succeeded in achieving this and to keep the prince Regent under their thumb through exploiting his financial difficulties. The Political conditions also much contributed for the success of their policies.

This policy of expansion had its own financial commitments also. The expenses of the factory were increasing year after year since 1730. From September 1735 to August 36, the factory had to incur 13.8% of its total expenditure on defence purpose and other requirements created by the Canarese invasion. This enhancement was criticised by the Governor and the Council as well as by the Court of Directors. The Directors reminded:

Your superiors have given you the proper directions, how to behave according to the different circumstances of affairs and persuade ourselves that you will act with the greatest prudence and precaution, to keep trade free and uninterrupted not withstanding the continued and intestine quarrels among the Malabar princes and we must urge it upon you to convince us that you have our interest at heart by keeping your expenses within as narrow bound as possible¹⁹.

A deliberate attempt was made by the factory to minimise the expenditure. For the year September 1736 to August 1737 the factory provided an amount 21.6% less than that incurred during the previous year. The military expenditure was decreased by 1.8% than in the previous year. Strict economy was impossible for the Tellicherry factory as it was guided by the idea of trade monopoly which was not permitted by the complex political conditions in Malabar. Even the sovereign power of the Kolathiries had been shattered by local vassals and the Canarese invasion made the situation worse. In such a situation, the factors had to play the role of a conqueror either through strategy and deceit or by forceful conquest. As the resources of the factory were meagre it adopted the former policy. Thus the British colonial policy of expansion had begun to function in Malabar even during the first half of 18th century as a matter of commercial necessity and political exigency created by the territory in which the factory was situated.

The foregoing study reveals the various methods undertaken by the Tellicherry factory in its expansion in Malabar. No major battle had been conducted by the factory in Malabar during the years under discussion. The territorial acquisition and consolidation of

political power were effected by devious dealings with the native chieftains instead of an open war with them. The superiority of the English arms also played an eminent role in the growth of the factory as the native chiefs approached them for assistance in their days of distress. The policy of territorial expansion was not an instructed or commanded policy either by their superiors or by the authority. It was decided by the men on the spot who rather worked hard for a trade monopoly and the external security of the factory. They were haunted by the fear of the ascendancy of the French and the Dutch rivals in Malabar. So they decided to outwit them by hook or crook. Their policies were often criticised by the superiors as the financial commitments of the factory were heavier. But when the wheel of expansion started to move, it kept on moving until the Company became the sole master of the land.

During the latter half of the 18th century, the Factory had to withstand many vicissitudes of political developments of Malabar. The wars taken place in Europe between the English and the French powers during the 18th century had been repeated in their colonial possessions and the settlements in India. As such the Austrian war of succession, the seven years war, the American war of Independence and the Napoleonic wars were fought between the English and the French settlements in which the native ruling powers also took part as allies on each side. In Malabar the Tellicherry Factory and the Mahe settlement utilised such war situations to expand their authority and power. Along with struggles for territorial expansion, the question of monopoly trade also had been involved in such armed conflicts and confrontations.

In 1766, Haider Ali, the Mysore Sultan invaded Chirakkal which had been practically a tributary state of Bednur, then a feudatory of the Vijayanagar rulers. As the Nabob had established his authority over Bednur, he had to realise the tribute from the Raja of Chirakkal. Further the Ali Rajas of Cannanore invited the Nabob to invade the territory. Although the English Factory had agreed upon to assist the Chirakkal Raja, the Factory adopted a neutral policy after making an agreement with Haidar Ali at Madayi on 23rd February 1766²⁰. This agreement permitted the English to trade in pepper wherever the arms of Haidar Ali were successful in Malabar. However, the Mysore government itself was later interested in monopoly trade. Such political and commercial relations followed by direct conquests destroyed the English trade in Malabar. The Dutch were compelled to sell their fortress of St. Angelo to the Ali Rajas for an amount of Rs. Two Lakhs. As they could not get pepper and other merchandise from Malabar the Dutch reduced their settlements in Malabar²¹. The English trade also declined considerably at Tellicherry. Finally it was reduced to a trading Residency from 4 March 1776 to 18 January 1784. The Second Anglo-Mysore war had been another major cause for the degradation of the Factory²².

Thus during the peace settlement at Mangalore in 1784, the English pressurised Tipu Sultan to get Malabar surrendered and establish the English authority. But Sultan was eager to keep Malabar under his administration²³. Again, the company initiated a war against Tipu Sultan in 1790. In 1792, the Treaty of Seringapatam, settled the matter and transferred Malabar in favour of the English²⁴. It was the beginning of the colonial administration in Malabar. These years

particularly from 1766 to 1792, was a determining period in the history of the trading houses at Tellicherry. They suffered on account of the political instability and the frequent wars and conflicts.

After 1792, the Factory appointed monopoly contractors for procuring pepper. The administrative affairs of Malabar were settled first by the Bombay Commissioners and subsequently by the Joint Commissioners²⁵. In 1794 based on the report of the commission the historic Tellicherry factory was abolished by Sir John Shore, the Governor General, on 17th July 1794²⁶.

Since the establishment of the Factory in 1683, it was struggling to establish a profitable trade and a possible territorial authority over the chieftains of Malabar. Robert Adams, the first full-time chief of the Factory, had been responsible to counter act the Dutch and the French influence in Malabar and establish the English in a respectable position in Malabar²⁷. He was one of the empire builders in his own limited way like Robert Clive and Warren Hastings. It was he who gave a firm footing to the factory with necessary fortification and establishment of diplomatic relations with the native chieftains and rulers. The factory when achieved a firm footing on the western coast could play a seminal role in defeating the Mysorean authority and finally annexing Malabar under the British sovereignty.

After the abolition of the Factory and its conversion into a trading agency, Tellicherry had gone into oblivion in the annals of the history of the English East India Company. In London, at the office of the Court of Directors, the chamber of the Commander in Chief was decorated with a beautiful painting of Tellicherry Factory²⁸.

Its role in the establishment of the British rule in India had become a completed process by the dawn of the 18th century.

In its history of a century, the Factory had given birth to a powerful trading house which had its unknown origin and the beginnings. This house of the Keyis with its merchant capital, and extensive trade relationship, succeeded in establishing its agencies in different centres like Bombay and Nagapattanam. Later the house turned to be a landed aristocracy and always extended support to the British. The house remained a separate socio-economic and cultural unit in the Muslim community of Malabar. Even now the Keyis of Malabar have their own tradition, and cultural heritage. Their dilapidated warehouses and bankasals (pandikasalas) on the sea shore remind us of an elaborate historical past of the Tellicherry Factory also. In fact the house of the Keyis had its origin from the capital of the Company. The factory's role as a trading agency helped the founder of the Keyi house to acquire rich merchant capital which he utilised in a profitable native trade. No such powerful trading house existed in Malabar during the end of the 18th century.

Notes and References

1. Quoted in A.Galletti,ed., *The Dutch in Malabar* (Madras, 1911) p.20.
2. Treaty was executed in 1715; *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and other Papers of Importance Relating to British Affairs in Malabar* (Madras, 1951 reprint) P.3.
3. In 1728 the Zamorin was indebted to the Company for 668122 fanams, (4 to 5 fanams Rupee) *Tellicherry Consultations: 1727-28*, Vol.III (Madras, 1933) p.86.
4. Logan, n.2, pp.5-6.
5. Treaty was executed on 21 March 1722, *Ibid.*, p.6.
6. Treaty on 24 February 1724, *Ibid*, p.7.
7. Treaty on 17 February 1725, p.13.
8. Treaty on 17 April 1728, *Ibid*, p.15-6.
9. The agreement was signed on 2 November 1730 and entered in the Diary of the Tellicherry Factory on 3 November 1730,
10. *Tellicherry Consultations 1732-33*, Vol.V, (Madras, 1933) Diary 8 May 1733, p.37.
11. W.Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.I (Madras, 1951 edn.) p.362.
12. Diary 5 October 1734, p.12.
13. Diary 14 October 1734, p.13.
14. Logan, n.2. P.23.
15. Diary 10 March 1735, P.63.
16. *Letters from Tellicherry : 1734-36*, Vol.IV (Madras, 1934) Stephen Law to Bombay, 17 November 1735.
17. Logan, n.2, pp.31-2
18. *Ibid.*, p.36
19. *Letters to Tellicherry : 1736-38*, Vol.II (Madras, 1934) P.18.
20. Logan, n.2 *Diary of Tellicherry Factory, 25 Feb.1766 in Part.I*, No.LXXXV, p.71.
21. Tellicherry Diary and Consultations, No.1481 for 1771, p.43-4. See also, K.K.N.Kurup, *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore* (Calicut University, 2001).

22. Details are given in K.K.N.Kurup, *History of the Tellicherry Factory* (Calicut University.P.O. 1985).
23. The treaty of Mangalore is given in Logan, *Treaties and Engagements*, Pt.I No.XCIII, pp.83-4.
24. See Treaty, *Ibid*, pt.II, No.II, 18 March, 1792, P.138.
25. In 1792, General Abercromby, the Governor of Bombay came Kannur and appointed William Ganul Farmer, a senior merchant and Alexander Dow, the Commander Bombay Commissioners. Later in December 1792, Jonathan Duncan and Charles Boddan, from Bengal were appointed to join the Bombay Commission. Jointly they were known as Joint Commissioners.
26. Sir John Shore's Minutes on Malabar Commissioners' Report. (Consultation No.2, 24 February 1794, National Archives, New Delhi).
27. Robert Orme, his nephew born at Anjengo Factory, was the official historian of the East India Company. See his major work, *A History of Military Transactions of British Nation in Indostan from the year 1745* (Madras, 1861 reprint).
28. The painting of the Tellicherry Factory (1732) was the joint work of G. Lambert and Samuel Scott, originally kept in the Military Committee Room of the East India Company.

Chapter Two

EMERGENCE OF A TRADING HOUSE

The early trading activities of Chovvakkaran Aluppy Kakka are not traceable from authentic historical sources. The family accounts had placed him by 1680, doing business in Tellicherry where the V.O.C or the Dutch East India Company had their trade with the permission of the Kolathiri, the king of Kolathnad. In 1663 the Dutch Company could defeat the Portuguese and sequester their settlements and fortress of St. Angelo in Cannanore. Kolathnad which produced the finest variety of pepper like white pepper immediately became a theatre of competitive commerce and trade for European Companies including the French and the English¹.

However the early English Factory records related to Tellicherry had not given any account of a trading house of some significance including the name of Chovvakkaran. The name of a Mussa appeared in the account given by the linguist of Tellicherry relating to the discussion with the Ali Raja on Dharmapatam. In the glossary it was given that he was the Chovvakkaran Moossa. It is quite impossible that he continued his active business in the dawn of the 19th century. Thus there is every possibility, that the house

must have originated with Aluppy Kakka as given in the family account sometime by 1750's. By that time, as an enthusiastic trader, he must have established his name and fame in and around Chovva from where he did his business. Even there was a possibility that he started his career as a petty trader in hill produces like pepper, sandal wood, and cardamom which invited much demand from the European Companies.

He is treated as the family head and even now revered by the family members by observing his annual death ceremonies in the Tazhale Mosque at Tellicherry, constructed by him for the exclusive use of his family. The term "Kakka" was used to address any respectable and elder members of other communities, particularly a Muslim by the Gujarati merchants.

There were no facilities for maritime trade at Chovva. Further the traders from Tellicherry and other places came to Aluppy to purchase pepper and merchandises for the English Factory. They made good profits out of such dealings. Thus Aluppy was thinking to migrate to Tellicherry in expectation of a profitable trade. Further the political situation in Kolathunad also compelled him to take an immediate decision following the Mysorean invasion of Chirakkal and other places in 1766 by Haidar Ali. Most of the coastal villages suffered due to the lootings and plunders by the enemy. Tellicherry as an English settlement maintained law and order and many people took refuge in this settlement with their valuables. The merchants also enjoyed considerable security who stayed within the limits of English settlement. It was not invaded also by Haider Ali².

In a political environment like this Aluppy migrated to

Tellicherry. His two sisters, Kayyumma was one among them, and two nephews Bappu and Moossa also accompanied him. As Tellicherry was included in the jurisdiction of the Kottayam raja, Aluppy approached him to get a site for copra curing, on the sea shore, on the southern side of the English fortress and their residential buildings. The Raja granted him the site for curing yard as well as for his residence. Within a decade the family enjoyed great reputation and also invited jealousy of other merchants. In Tellicherry Aluppy's main dealings were with the English who advanced sufficient capital also based on contracts for supplying a stipulated quantity of pepper and other produces. Further he could also get contracts for supplying rice and other edible items to the garrison of the Factory. His warehouse was known as Kakka's Bankasal.

This earnest beginnings of Aluppy at Tellicherry led to the establishment of a trading house later known as "Keyis" with great reputation among the officials of the Company and the native rulers.

The family of Vaniyambalam at Tellicherry was also known for its wealth and trading activities. Its rivalry and jealousy against the new comer Aluppy, were well known in the family tradition of the keyis. Aluppy and his family members were denied the facilities of the mosque of Chalil owned by this house. Further the religious service of the local Qazi who came under its authority was also denied to Aluppy. Such denial of facilities was practised by several landowning families in Malabar including the skilled labour of Carpenter, and iron-smith. The service of the priest was also denied to certain families by the landed class.

Aluppy solved this problem by constructing a separate mosque for his service with decorated motifs and domes. It is known as Tazhayile mosque nearby his warehouse or Bankasal. Later he was buried in the same mosque where a separate building was constructed. His wife and sisters were also buried nearby under the same roof. A separate khasi was also appointed by him for the religious service of his family³.

As a pious Muslim, he wanted to forget such petty local feuds with Vaniyambalam and he put a proposal to marry a woman by himself from that family. However it was rejected that his status was not equal to them that he was a newcomer. It was the family tradition that he wrote in his diary that no member of his family in future should make an alliance with them. But that wish was neglected only one or twice by his family members in the whole history of two centuries. Then he married in a local house of Acharath with little affluence.

After some years Aluppy found that the members of his family were increasing in numbers and their facilities in the existing house were not comfortable. He purchased a new plot, at the eastern side, and constructed a house for residence. It was named after Orkkatteri house

His nephews, Bappan and Moossa, were also initiated into the family business by Aluppy, but encouraged to be independently. His second sister stayed separately, leading to another family branch in the same trading house of Pazhaya Parambath.

There were several rich traders in Tellicherry contemporary to Aluppy and his nephew Moossa. Their frequent references were

available in the Factory records of the latter half of the 18th century. But none of them came into prominence as the house of Chovvakkaran in establishing a reputed trading house and later an aristocratic landed Tarawad among the Muslims. The only example was the house of the Ali Rajas who started as a merchant prince under the patronage of the Kolathiri and later became a chieftain with authority over land and islands of Lakshadweep⁴. As a house of landed gentry, the successors of Aluppy commanded vast resources and social respect. They had continuous collaboration with the British in their formative years. But later the same Company had been responsible to destroy their maritime trade and commerce through its colonial aspirations.

However the emergence of this trading house itself was depended on the existence of the Company's settlement and Factory. Its advance payment for procuring merchandise and supply of other necessary items to the English garrison furnished Aluppy and others with necessary capital to carry on their business. They appointed their own trust worthy agents and servants in different parts of the country and they distributed advance payments to the pepper and coconut producers according to their estimated produce much before the harvest. This flow of European capital appointed their own trust worthy agents and servants in different parts of the country and they distributed advance payments to the pepper and coconut producers according to their estimated produce much before the harvest. This flow of European capital through the corridors of the Factory had steered much economic activities in the region. Such a system of contractual trade based on advancement of capital was

introduced by the Factory for procuring necessary quantity of pepper and other items. If the contract trader could not supply the prescribed quantity on account of market situation and competition, he had to pay a damage of Rs.5 to Rs.10 per candy for the undelivered Quantity.

In the case of pepper, the merchants procured at the rate of 640lbs from the producers and supplied at the rate of 600 to the Company. It was not traceable, what price they offered to the producers. As such there was considerable facility for a good margin of profits. When the East India Company established its territorial authority and administration of Malabar the trade system underwent radical changes⁵. This change in the nature of trade must have been a reason for the withdrawal of the house from its coveted trade and commerce, run by their ancestors.

When Aluppy came to the end of his life, he could see that a flourishing trading house was established with his hard work, intelligence and sincerity. It was further looked after by his own nephews, Bappan and Moossa who were more illustrious and dynamic than himself. The family tradition described him as a "rising star" and builder of the house. But his successor, Moossa was the "rising sun" of this house.

The trading house of the Keyis after Aluppy came to more prominence due to the economic activities of his successor Moossa. Gradually the house adopted Marumakkathayam which had all its potentials and weaknesses. Its dynamism was lost as a corporate body. But its cultural impact continued as an identical group among the Muslims.

The martilineal system or *Marumakkathayam* was followed in Malabar for several centuries by several communities including the propertied class of Muslims. The undivided family properties were inherited in the lineage of sister and her issues. The children of the male members were eliminated from the main family known as *Tarawad*. Such children had property rights only in their mother's *Tarawad*.

This medieval institution with all its customary laws and practices continued till the early decades of the 20th century. As part of nationalist movement in Kerala there were social criticism against this institution. Finally it was abolished by statutory intervention. Even in the hey days of this institution there were practices of founding *tavazhies* or branches in the line of the sister and her issues. Such *Tavazhis* functioned as subordinate institutions under the main *Tarawad*. Although such practices of the Hindu community were against the Islamic law of succession. In Malabar many landed houses like the Keyis followed the system. They were also governed by peculiar Hindu customary laws. The British courts interpreted the rights and privileges of the *Karanavan* or the uncle and also the rights of the nephews and nices or *anantharavan* in a family. The uncle enjoyed the ritualistic and economic status along with the right to control all family matters like a father in a paternal family. A *Karanavan* could be removed only in the case of insanity and mismanagement.

Generally a **Tarawad** was founded by a particular uncle and then it continued to exist through the sisters and their children. In the case of the Keyis, the founder was Aluppy Kakka. As a founder of the family special ritual and ceremonies were conducted in the

mosque where his Makbara (burial) existed. He was also given a special status with a special tomb. In several Hindu *Tarawads* like the Kodoth and the Vengayil families, special idols were installed in the memory of the founding uncles. The special tomb and special rituals are unIslamic for some sections of the Muslim community. Like the *Marumakkathayam* practice of the community, these rituals are also continued.

After the demise of Aluppy Kakka, his eldest nephew Moossa Kakka became the uncle who managed the family affairs. He was buried in a special place at the Oadathil mosque. He married one of the daughters of Aluppy as a cross cousin relation. Such marriage was a usual practice both among the Hindus and the Muslims in Malabar. In one way it was a social insurance and gratuity for the dedicated supervision and management of the *Tarawad* by the *Karanavan* that his daughter would be tied up in his own family with different status to a nephew⁶. He may also become an uncle one day. There had been several such marriages in the Keyis' family since the days of Moossa Kakka.

However there were no marriages among the *tavazhi* members and among the *Tavazhis* themselves. The marriages among the cross cousins had resulted in the dissemination of habits and culture in maintaining the identity of the Keyis as a separate cultural entity.

In the long history about 250 years, the house of the Keyis was divided into several branches. All such families did not enjoy the same economic status and prosperity. Some of them deteriorated into common families, but some of them enjoyed prosperity and wealth along with political influence.

The construction of Mahals and mansions became the symbols of prosperity. Further it was also necessary for the joint families to construct big houses to provide separate Ara or room for the visiting husbands of the ladies. Even now this custom is prevalent among several Muslim families of Malabar. Gradually the major constructions of the warehouses were neglected in favour of beautiful residential houses. The shift from trade and commerce to the ownership of land was also compelled by the rules and regulations of the matrilineal system. The prosperity of trade depended much on individual effort and efficiency of supervision. Such hard work was not necessary for absentee-landlordism depending on rental income. In brief the combination of all such adversities had contributed to the shift from trade to landed aristocracy.

Notes and References

1. Alfred Martineau, *The Origins of Mahe of Malabar* (Trans.) 2004, PP.34-40, 129. See also A.Galletti, *Dutch in Malabar*, PP.103-04.
2. *Letters Sent*, Tellicherry to the court of Directors, dt.18 Dec. 1769, S.No.1589 (4 Jan. to 18 Dec. 1769) P.103. See also N.K.Sinha, *Hyder Ali*, Calcutta, 1959 edn.; P.146.
3. For details See, A.P.Ummerkutty, *The Keyis of Malabar* (Mal), Tellicherry, 1916.
4. K.K.N.Kurup, *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, Calicut 2002 edn., pp.78-87. See also Arakkal Records, Letter to Henry Pottinger, the Governor of Madras from the Beebi of Arakkal, dt.12 Jan. 1839.
5. William Logan, *Malabar*, Madras 1951 edn. PP.344-50, 392 Also Logan, *Treaties, Engagements and Other Papers of Importance*, Madras 1951 edn., PP.63-65, 67-68, 108. See also K.K.N.Kurup, *History of the Tellicherry Factory*, Calicut University, 1985, PP.279-81.
6. Kaleeswaram Raj and Suchithra, *Commentaries on Marumakkathayam Law*, Payyannur, 1995, P.P.26-55. See also Balakrishnan.P.V, *Matrilineal System in Malabar*, Cannanore, 1981.

Chapter Three

MOOSSA KAKKA - A MERCHANT CAPITALIST

Apart from the reference of the so called migration of Moossa Kikka with his uncle to Tellicherry, there are no authentic source relating to his early career as a merchant. But the family tradition reveals that he had several ups and downs in his career. He was taught to be independent by his uncle. He started his career at Tellicherry and later shifted to Allaphey (Alappuzha). When he lost every thing, he approached the Maharaja of Travancore seeking some assistance, particularly in kind of timber including teak. The Raja was kind enough and assisted the 'Northern Moossa' with the required shipments. Later he was able to return the entire cost of the merchandise with interest. But the Raja rewarded him for his trustworthiness and returned all such items and payments. Further he was also given a vessel full of teak for his own use. This cargo was carried to Tellicherry and was used in the construction of the Oadathil Mosque covered with copper¹.

The Mysorean invasions in Malabar and the subsequent affairs of the English East India Company were fully utilised by Moossa to establish his fortunes.

By 1782 Haidar Ali was in a series of battles known as the Second Anglo-Mysore War. The Mysore Commandant Sardarkhan marched to Dharmapatam and camped at Melur. He was assisted by the forces of the Ali Raja Beebi. She did every thing in her power to distress the English settlement by preventing supplies and provisions by sea².

Shortage of money had become a great problem to the Company at Tellicherry due to the war. A meeting was convened by the English Factors with the residents and the merchants. An amount of Rs.14,000/- was floated for which security was also given. It was at this context Moossa was engaged to compel the Beebi to join the English side. As his mission was a failure, the Beebi's fort and palace were pillaged by Brigadier General Norman Macleod. After a terrible fight the Beebi and her relatives were imprisoned³.

The Beebi was released only after executing a peace settlement between herself and Macleod in December 1783 in which Moossa was the surety to fulfill its financial obligations⁴.

When the natives of Malabar expected again an invasion by Tipu Sultan after 1788, some of them with their valuables took refuge in the English settlement of Tellicherry. Then Tipu Sultan sent his protest against the Tellicherry Board for having given asylum to several Nayar landlords and subjects of his government. Many of them with the help of Moossa and others under the guidance of the Company escaped to Travancore in the vessels. After the termination of the Third Anglo-Mysore War, they again came back to Tellicherry being assisted by Moossa and others⁵. During the third Anglo-Mysore

war, the Beebi's settlement and fortress at Kannur again were pillaged by the English.

General Abercromby, the Governor of Bombay by the ship Drake with the 77 regiment of His Majesty's force consisting about four thousand soldiers arrived on 5th December 1790 at Tellicherry. On 14th December seige was opened against the Beebi's settlement at Kannur. The fort was beseiged by them and in the action the Beebi sent her nine years old son Abdul Khader as hostage and requested for peace. By subduing the Beebi in this war, the Company extended its claim to the Cannanore group of islands in the Lakshadweep. Here also Moossa became a surety for her payments to the Company.

The Dewan Kunhi Mackey and Ahmadvutty of the Beebi stated that,

... We do therefore agree and give in writing to abide by the declaration on oath of Moossa (who is an inhabitant of Tellicherry and a man of credit and to be depended on) as to the value of all the said Beebee's territories, as well as those on the continent as her islands...⁶.

The above document highlights his political and financial significance in the circle of English administration as well as among the native chieftains.

When the Beebi could not pay her arrears of revenue for years 1794-'95 in time to the Company again Moossa undertakes to pay Rs.Ten thousand within a month to the Company.

This agreement stated :

I, Chocara Mousa, merchant of Tellicherry do hereby bind myself, my heirs and executors to pay the Honourable Company the sum of Rs.10,000/- on account of Adea Raja Beebee of Cannanore within the period of twenty five days from the date hereof ⁷.

This was executed by Moossa on 4th December 1795 at Calicut and signed by R.Rickards, Private Secretary to the Governor. Moossa was handling the entire merchandise from the islands.

As early as 1793, after the cession of Malabar province to the East India Company, the latter was engaging to execute pepper contracts with the merchants at Tellicherry⁸. In this contract of December 1793, Moossa and Bappan promised to procure and supply 350 candies. The above contract is reproduced as a nodal:

We, the undersigned merchants of Tellicherry, do hereby faithfully engaged promise that we will to the utmost of our power and endeavour to secure for the Honourable Company all the pepper produced this year in the Northern Division of the Malabar Province, and that we will not give a grain away from the company but deliver the same to the Chief of Tellicherry. As we cannot at present specify what the quantity will be, we do engage however that it shall not be less than the quantity set opposite to our names respectively; and we do hereby engage to receive payment at the rate of 200 rupees per candy of 600 pounds weight⁹.

Signed at Tellicherry

18th December 1793	Chocara Mousa	250	candies
	Chocara Bapen	100	Candies

Baniabelty Coyamo	200	" "
Devarsa Bandary	250	" "
Subayya Sett	300	" "

Witness to the above signatures D. Rodrigues

Moossa played an important role in the estimation of total produce of pepper in Malabar immediately after its occupation by the British. His family members like Chovvakkaran Kunhy Pokkar and others made contracts with the company for procurement of pepper from territories like Kottayam and Kurumbranad. In one of the letters by J.A. Grant on 31st December 1797, it was informed Makky that the commissioners would be paying him an amount of Rs.40,000/- (Forty thousand) advanced by him to the Raja of Kurumbranad on behalf of Kottayam¹⁰.

In the case of Kunhy Pokkar, who was indebted to the Company of an amount of Rs.15,481/- being the second term of revenue (1799) from Kurumbranad, the Company obtained a security bond from one Cunhy Tarry for the payment and relieved Pokker from his responsibility¹¹. All such transactions reveal that the trading house of Chovvakkaran entered into several revenue and pepper contracts with the native rulers and the Company. They even functioned as mediators and contractors in the revenue farming in their capacity as big merchants of Tellicherry.

The wealth accumulated by Moossa and his family members as in a joint stock company of a Tarawad gave this house much prosperity. They could exploit properly the economic situation which existed on the occasion of this transfer from native rule to the colonial

administration. In 1800, the Commission of Buchanan who visited Malabar reported:

"The Company has always made its purchase by a contract entered into with a few native merchant or in fact for many years almost with one only; that is with Choucara Mousa of Tellicherry. Several others have also dealing with the Company; but one of them is Mousa's brother and the others are in a great measure his dependants"¹².

During the nineties of the eighteenth century Moossa sent his ships to Mocha and challenged even the king of Cochin to intercept them. In all difficulties Moossa's reliance was on the Factory and the English Company which he described as "our own Company"¹³. The merchants like Moossa during the Mysorean invasions, whole heartedly supported the Company by men and money. Religion did not persuade them to join with Tipu Sultan against the Company.

After the British occupation of Malabar, the entire contract trade of pepper was in the hands of Moossa. The monopoly of the Company and the price reduction forced many cultivators not to undertake new cultivation of pepper vines¹⁴. Moossa turned to monopolise the trade in timber. The Zamorin could not interfere in the timber trade of Moossa.

As a timber merchant he had to compete with Mundock Brown who had established a timber yard at Baliapatam. The trees were widely cut down and brought through the river costing Rs.70/- to Rs.80/- a water load and sold for Rs.700/- to Rs.800/-¹⁵.

The trade rivalry between these two merchants could be traced in a litigation before the Bombay Mayor's Court during 1790-'93. In

this case Moossa prosecuted Murdock Brown for a debt of Rs.30.750/-, being the price of Rs.500/- candies of pepper. Brown maintained that he had not received the pepper from Moossa. Then the latter called on James Rivert as a witness and produced a letter in which Brown had written in 1790. Brown had stated in this letter to make up any deficiency in the payment for the pepper. Robert Taylor, the chief of the Factory supported Moossa's case and the Court found it in his favour¹⁶.

All such references highlight the growing influence of Moossa in Malabar as a head of a big trading house. An instance related to his maritime trade had been referred to by Ashindas Gupta. In 1797 Moossa's ships returned from Mocha bringing in their cargo some coffee for the English Company. The correspondence related to this coffee between Moossa and Richard Torin, resident at Calicut, was available in the Factory records. One of these ships was lost with its cargo off Mocha in 1798. A second one and two dhows lost all their treasure to a French Privateer of Socotra in the same year. The total loss was computed to the tune of Rs.3,50,000/-. Moossa challenged the right of King of Cochin to tax his boats engaged in the cloth trade with Kottar in 1796. Again there was a fuss about his boats being taxed in 1797. Finally he got such taxes abolished. While he was having his difficulty about the taxes he had to pay on cloth-boats, he made a petition in which he wrote about the Company "as our own Company" and described himself as "an honest friend of the Company"¹⁷.

These references in the factory records help us to understand his influence in the administration of the Company in

Malabar. Such influences also made him an affluent merchant than his uncle and the founder of this trading house, Aluppy Kakka.

As a merchant capitalist Moossa was keen to look after his financial interest than making an involvement in the local politics. He believed like all collaborators of the Raj that the Company was his best friend. But in the days of the Pazhassi rebellion in Wayanad his agents had supplied fire arms and gun powder to the rebels in exchange of pepper. T.H.Baber, the Sub Collector, wrote to the District Collector Thomas Warden that the rebels had friendly relationship with the prominent Muslim merchants¹⁸. He wanted to treat all of them as committing treason. But Warden was of opinion that even before the proclamation of the Collector, Moossa and other merchants were in contracts with the Company and thus they could not be treated as traitors¹⁹.

In a letter sent by Baber on 14th March 1804, he again pointed out that out of 400 candies of pepper purchased by Chovvakkaran Macky and Moossa from Chirakkal, 200 candies belonged to the Pazhassi rebels. They deserved only capital punishment. He also suggested that Moossa should be made to reside somewhere out of his centre of limitless influence. He also desired to keep Macky in another place till the end of the rebellion. Baber was of opinion that Moossa had secret friendship with many of the leaders of the rebellion and he was interested in the perpetuation of the rebellion²⁰.

Even as early as in September 1800 Col. Wellesley (later Duke of Wellington) realised that Moossa had given rice and other supplies to the rebels. He also wrote to Col.Sartorius to inform

Moossa that his habit was to put such persons on gallows²¹. But Moossa could survive all such possible threats and remain at the Centre of his activities in Tellicherry. When he passed away in 1807, he could see that his trading house was expanding, consolidating and thriving them evenbefore on the Malabar coast.

Moossa was not only a business magnate but also a financier to the English Company and others. The Company paid an interest also on the bonds issued by them. Although there were no banking facilities during his time he could utilise the system of bills of exchange for transferring money to Bombay and other distant places through the Tellicherry Factory. The payment was made in the Company's account and the Company paid the money to the agent concerned in a distant place like Bombay. Thus there was no risk in the transmission of money as in the modern banking. The Company turned to be a banking facilitator in the case of import and export.

As in the traditional *Marumakkathayam* families of Malabar, Moossa also married his cross cousin, the daughter of Aluppy Kaka, the founder and uncle of the house. According to the family tradition he had a second wife also from the family of Barayil. His major achievement in favour of the Muslims was the beautiful construction of the Oadathil mosque in the heart of the town. The teak wood used for its construction was obtained from the Maharaja of Travancore. It was a rare mosque with carved panels and covered by copper sheets. He also made golden domes for decoration. But it was objected to by the ruling Kolathiri as an exclusive privilege of a Hindu temple. Whatever it may be later his descendants succeeded in erecting the domes with a major celebration.

Although the Mosque is now used for the *Juma* of the Muslims, the burial facilities are extended only to the family members of the Keyis. Moossa as the uncle and the owner of the Mosque was buried in a separate *Makbara* in the courtyard of the mosque. Now it is housed in an extended Prayer hall.

Moossa Kakka not only acquired immense wealth for his family, but also he showed charity to the needy and deserving. The family tradition is focussed on one story similar to that of the blessing of Srikrishna on Kuchela. One Valiya Seethi Tangal of Quilandy approached him seeking alms for construction of his damaged house and for conducting marriage of his daughters. He was comfortably entertained at his own house by Moossa for six months. Then the Thangal left him without materialising his desire. When he came back to his house, he could not believe that a new house what had been built and sufficient properties assigned. Moossa kept it as a secret and executed the work by engaging an agent for this²².

Once an Arab merchant who had lost his vessels and merchandise came to Tellicherry and represented his distress and loss to Moossa Kakka. He sought his assistance and two vessels to start again his occupation. Moossa was generous to adhere to his request, but others were against such assistance. The Arab could not return for two years and every body murmured of the family loss incurred in this account. But one day he came back with all items and additional presents. Moossa received back he had given and other items returned to the Arab. This was a good example of his generosity and nature of munificence²³.

He was quite trust worthy in all his business dealings. Once

there was an occasion that his vessel loaded with rice from Bengal did not arrive in time. As he had to deliver the stipulated number of rice bags to the garrison he was much worried about it. But his nephews told him that they could arrange the bags through some malpractice with the store keeping. As the family head and uncle he warned them never to indulge in a clandestine business but always to adopt honesty and sincerity²⁴. Now one would dare to pose a question that such a honest man was helping the Pazhassi rebels by supplying arms and ammunition to fight against his own master, the Company. The only possible answer one could realise was that the assistance given by him to the rebels was not for profit making but for a cause which was dearest to him and also due to the traditional loyalty towards the deposed king of Kottayam.

There were two stages in the career of Moossa. Before 1792 the Company with which he collaborated was a trade agency camouflaged by political and territorial ambitions. Thus there was no much control by them over his programme including import and export. This situation helped Moossa in consolidating an affluent business with high profit. But in the second stage, the Company turned to be the political authority or sovereign itself in Malabar. Thus there arose much differentiation in its policies. Their direct administrative system compelled them to realise more revenue from their territorial possessions. For this the suppression of market, particularly of pepper was necessary but it was impossible. As Pamela Nightingale evaluated the situation, the Company had to go for free trade and introduce high price for agricultural produce. The traditional policy based on contract and monopoly was to be given

up in the better interest of trade and agriculture. The entire system later contributed to free trade and the house of Moossa Kakka and others suffered in the new situation. Such a policy initiated the decline of the house also. Moossa's successors more depended on land management instead of carrying trade and commerce.

Notes and References

- 1) See the family history of the Keyis written by A.P.Ummerkutty, *Malayalathile Keyimar* (Tellicherry, 1916) Malayalam. Also, a brief English version by C.Vasudevan, *The Keyis of Malabar*, Tellicherry, 1930.
- 2) *Diary of Tellicherry Factory*, 10 November 1780, No.1491, P.155, Manuscripts, Tamilnadu Archives, hereafter TNA.
- 3) Military Sundry Book, Macleod to Macartney 17 December 1783 appears in Feb.1784, No.LXI, PP.766-7.
- 4) William Logan, *Treaties Engagements And Other Papers of Importance*, (Madras, 1951 edn), Part.I, No.XCII, P.82. *Tellicherry Diary and Consultations*, MSS, TN.17 Feb.1789, No.1504, PP.83-4.
- 5) See also K.K.N.Kurup, *History of the Tellicherry Factory* (Calicut University, 1988).
6. Logan, n.4, Part.II, 26 Feb.1793, No.XXX P.117.
7. *Ibid*, 4 December 1795, No.C.III, P.248.
8. Devarsa Bhandary, Baniabelty Coyamo, and Subay Sett were other merchants.
9. Logan, n.4, Part II, 18 Dec. 1793, No.LXXI, P.212.
10. *Ibid*; No.CLVIII, P.286.
11. *Ibid*, No.CXCV, 10 July 1799, P. 323.
12. Quoted in Kurup, n.5.
13. *Ibid*, P.281.
14. A.Das Gupta, *Malabar in Asian Trade*, P.129.
15. Pamela Nightingale, *Trade and Empire in Western India*, P.101.
16. *Ibid*, P.114.
17. A.Das Gupta, n.14.PP.128-131.
18. T.H.Baber to Thomas Warden, received on 10 March 1804 vide Inward Letters in the Political Department, March - October 1804, No.2275, PP.1-7.
19. Warden to Baber, 29 Feb.1804. *Diary of Principal Collector*, No.2383.
20. K.K.N.Kurup, *Pazhassi Samara Rekhakal* (Calicut, 2004), PP.100-1.
21. Duke of Wellington's *Despatches*, 18 September 1800.
22. A.P.Ummerkutty, n.4.
23. *Ibid*
24. *Ibid*

Chapter Four

THE LEGACY OF THE KEYIS

It is seen that the Keyis of Malabar emerged as a trading house from among the Mappila Muslim Community of North Malabar during the time of the British hegemony in the 19th century. This mercantile house enjoyed a significant position in the affairs of Malabar particularly by the close of the 18th century. Since there was no separate trading community among the Muslims of Malabar, the Keyis developed themselves into a mercantile group like the Konkanis, the Mamens and Gujaratis of the West - Coast of India. Though the Keyis have their origin from Aluppy Kakka, the house remained in the pinnacle of its glory during the period of his nephew Moosa Kakka who had been referred to in all the European documents as Choacara Mousa¹. Under the patronage of the English East India Company, they could invest their money not only in trade and commerce but in extensive landholdings and in large buildings like emporiums both for procuring commodities from hinterland and for seaside trade. This aspect has been observed by K.M.Panikkar as follows.

With the establishment of European trading centres in the main coastal areas of India, there had developed a powerful Indian Capitalist class closely associated with the foreign merchants, and deriving great profits from trade with them².

Traders like Moossa Kakka were very keen in the procurement and supply of goods and to the amount already fixed as they were the adherants of strict Islamic principles and in accordance with the concept of *Al-Amin* (The trust worthy). They never resorted to clandestine trade often followed by many traders in their dealings with the foreigners especially in those days of piracy and deceit. Thus the Keyis of Tellicherry could achieve much name and fame in the coastal trade and earn the whole hearted co-operation and support of the British officials. No doubt that Moossa and his successors always relied on the Company³.

Thus the closeness and affinity of the Keyis with the English definitely resulted into the evolution of a new Anglo Islamic culture in the littoral of Malabar which was purely urban in character, a rare specimen which could not be expected in the other Islamic contours of the region. As indomitable adherants of Sunni Islamism, the Keyis, like other Mappila Muslims of North Malabar, followed local customs, rituals and ceremonies. As landed aristocrats and wealthy merchants, the Keyis have a distinct family status and social recognition when compared to the other Muslim families of Malabar.

The Keyis like the Nairs and other Mappila Muslims of Malabar, followed the Matrilineal system of inheritance tracing their descent from female members. Hence the *Karanavar* or maternal uncle of the house has all the rights in the *Tarawad* who owns and

manages all the properties and dictates matters concerning the family. When the sister's son becomes 'a Keyi' or the heir-apparent in the house the son of a Keyi never gets that privilege. On account of their aristocratic status, they could not go for contract in marriage relations with middle or lower classes and hence most of them preferred cross-cousin marriage as a rule. As in the case of Nairs, such a practice was intended "to resist the division of joint family properties"⁵. The family property belongs to all the members whether male or female. But the family is maintained and controlled by the eldest male member of the *Taravad*, the *Karanavar* (Uncle).

There is every reason to believe that the Keyis have followed matriliney from the Nairs as other Mappila Muslims of North Malabar⁶ and the Arakkal family, the only Muslim royal House who followed the system⁷. Though various theories have come up regarding the origin of the system, one most acceptable aspect is its attraction to restrict the partition under the customary law which could be attributed to some kind of safeguard provided for impartible *taravad* property⁸. It is true that the Mappilas of Malabar as a rule followed matriliney, though it was opposed to the tenets of Quran and the Islamic *Shariah*. One of the strong explanations is that the Muslims of North Malabar adopted the system by way of conversion⁹. The wide acceptance of Marumakkathayam by the Muslims of Kolathunad is further explained by writers like Logan as a customary practice among the Hindus of the coastal areas¹⁰. Hence being the prominent tradesmen of the region, and aristocratic Mappilas the Keyis also adopted the system as per the local practice. At the same time a difference could be seen in the lineage that the headship of the

family, i.e. the *Karanavar* is vested only in the eldest male member of the family and never a woman in his absence. Here we have to note specially the custom which is totally different in the case of the Arakkal Muslim Family of Kannur where the eldest female member only can be the head of the Taravadu. Though the descent is through the female line, the eldest female has no role in the *Tarawad*. Hence though matriarchal, it is a male dominated family. While the nephews are the members of the *Tarawad*, their wives and children are not its members. Again the husbands of the women folk are treated only as 'inangans' or outsiders as practiced by Namboodiris and Nairs. Here among the Keyis the bridegroom known as 'Puthiyappila' has a superb status in the family even if he is a nephew who has been given the Uncle's daughter as the bride as in the practice of a cross-cousin marriage. The Uncle even gives gifts including dress and Mahar (bride price) to the bridegroom as a duty of him as the Uncle. But in the case of the Keyis the children of the outside male members who have marital relationship with the Keyi women have all the legality to be the heirs of the family. The *Karanavar* was the supreme administrator of the family holding all powers concerning the affairs of the *Tarawad*. Neither his brothers nor the husbands of his sisters have no voice whatsoever in the house even in deciding on matters concerning the marriage of children. On such occasions, their fathers are least consulted and their presence or absence makes no difference or least felt in the family. On the other hand the children had more respect and regard to their uncle compared to their father.

But the unity or cohesion of the *Tarawad* did not last long. It began to disintegrate raising the issue of property, management

and power. The situation became more intense with the death of Moossa Kakka and with the emergence of different *Tavazhis*(lineages). Thus apart from the original Orkkatteri, new branches like Keloth, Valiapura and Puthiapura came to being. Some ascribe to the role of Valia Makki and Cheriya Makki to the intensification of the conflict and for the formation of new houses and *Tavazhis*. The Division led to the formation of different *Tavazhis* which was only a natural corollary of mid nineteenth century which developed as a result of the new socio-economic situations. Other *tavazhies* also developed through Aluppy Kakka's second sister as Chovvakkaran Pazhayaparambath, Chovvakkaran Pazhukath and Chovvakkaran Pazhaya Malika. Bappan Kutti Keyi and Pazhukkath Aluppy Keyi are eminent members of these branches. The economic status and security of the family was declining due to the decreased revenue and the increased liability which could not withstand the newly emerging socio-economic pressures. The defiant and revoltsome younger generations also found fault with the elderly *Karanavar* who by this time have shown the tendency to follow patriliney. He was losing control over the *taravad* property due to his tendency for assuming the headship as father in a family with his wife and children.

The laziness and lethargy of most of the members of the family compelled them to enjoy only the ancestral properties on which they could not add anything in the later period. But at the same time the numbers of the new claimants increased to share the existing properties as new heirs who have fresh demands and requirements from the elders. The lavishness, generosity and extravaganza of the Keyis in tune with the life style and grandeur of the 19th century,

further caused to the crumbling of the riches kept in reserve much to the criticism of the younger generations. Some of whom were not even hesitant to file suits against their *Karanavars* demanding partition. By the beginning of 20th century, as in the case of Nairs, the joint family system and its socio-economic structure has been viewed as hindrance to individual development and achievements. This does not mean that the Keyis totally discarded matriliney, instead they strengthened patrilineal ties as much as possible with the matrilineal descent¹¹.

Women, Marriage, Rituals and Ceremonies

Like other Mappila women, the women folk among the Keyis were confined to their apartments with strict seclusion. As we have already seen, the matrilineal system practiced by the Keyis did not in any way enhance the status of their women except the economic and personal security that they have enjoyed in their houses under the canopy of the supreme *Karanavar*. Their life is solely centred around their children, husband and other members of her maternal house. She is a permanent member of the house with all occupational and legal rights, though she makes occasional visits to her husband's house. Since they follow the matrilineal residence system, even the freedom of movement is restricted to a great extent. Social scientists like Kathleen Gough have linked professional preoccupancies of the men folk with the origin of such matrilineal system as found among the Mappilas. She observes,

Mappila men's folk has always tended to take them away from home. Traditionally merchants of the ports sailed up and down the coast and sometimes to the Middle East... Inland trade and carriers also travelled, perhaps thirty or

forty miles from home, sleeping in rest houses and warehouses. Given matriliney and with the men often away, it was natural that women, as among central Kerala Nayars, should remain in their natal houses protected by the head of their own matrilineal group¹².

In the early period the girls of the Keyi families were not given formal education except the fundamentals of religious life by a visiting religious teacher called the *Mulla* or *Musaliar*. Such a practice continued till puberty and afterwards they were married and shut up in the houses with the main duty of rearing children and nursing their husbands and elders. As other Mappila women they never went out of their houses except for visiting relatives, that too not freely but with the accompaniment of father or husband or with a boy. Such visitations are often in the night with proper veil and a male child. Professor Ilamkulam Kunhan Pillai describes such practices prevalent among Namboodiri women in Kerala¹³.

Like any other Mappila women, the Keyi women had a comfortable stay in their houses with a separate and decorated room called *Maniyara* as a time honoured custom prevalent among the Mappilas of coastal Malabar. This self contained and colourful room is exclusively meant for the couple arranged with necessary requirements like furniture including cot, sofa, chair, table, almirah with an attached bath and toilet. As other Mappila Muslim women, the Keyi women are kept in complete seclusion and promiscuous inter mingling is unthinkable even to the sophisticated Keyis. Their apartments are clean, picturesque and richly decorated. The roofings and windows are adorned with beautiful carvings exposing their pride and wealth in their constructions.

Though the Muslim marriages are simple civil contracts, festivities, ceremonies and colourful rituals followed the function apart from a sumptuous dinner. In olden times the marriages were conducted in the night time as Brahmins and Namboodiris but with much splendour and illumination especially during the first visit of the bridegroom in the house with his friends and relatives. He will be garlanded and a symbolic washing of his feet, probably by his brother-in-law, will be done to which some gold coin must be put in the water pot, called *kindi* (made of bronze with a long pouring tail). After the entry of the bridegroom in the house the 'Nikah' will be solemnized by the Qazi of the locality in the presence of atleast two witnesses. The contract between the father, if he is not available a *Wali* or a deputy, and the bridegroom will be made over some *Mahr* (a bride price) as per the capacity or status of his family. This practice requires a few minutes time concluding by a *dua* or prayer and afterwards the groom will be taken to the *Maniyara*. The bride also will be brought into the *Maniyara* in her bridal dress and full of ornaments accompanied by her companions with *Oppana* songs. This custom is known as 'Ara kootal' or Arayil koottal (joining in the room). Then the groom and the party leaves the house. From the next day onwards he will be a regular visitor of the house and for a few weeks this is limited to night alone. The day-stay is not that much desirable since it creates a positive discomfort for the prestigious groom, though not prohibited. There will be feasts and special dinners in bride's residence for days together after the marriage. This reminds us of the practice commonly followed by the Brahmins throughout India and Namboodiris in Kerala who used to

solemnize their marriages in nights alone. The practice of 'night visiting husband' also was common among the Namboodiris and Nairs in Kerala. A most noticeable thing among the Keyis of Malabar is that their marriages are so intact and there is almost no case of divorce among them for a long period. This may be due to the continuation of cross-cousin marriages in which also involve heavy property rights. There were also rare instances of *Fasq* (the right of a woman unilaterally to divorce her husband on her own will). A case has been reported from a Keyi family, the first of its kind in Malabar, that a Keyi woman, one Puthiyavalappil Barja divorcing her husband Chovvakkaran Keloth Assoo Keyi who is the nephew of her former husband Khadarkutty Keyi¹⁴. Evidently such a marriage proposal was made by the nephew with the widow of the deceased Uncle with the fear of loosing the heavy property already given to Barja by his uncle.

Another important function in association with the marriage is the celebrations in the previous night called the Henna (*Mailanchi*) Night. This is purely an Arab practice introduced to Malabar with the advent of the Arabs. Both the bride and her relatives and companions used to apply henna paste in decorative designs on the palm extending to the elbow and feet of the bride and others who joined in the function. This also is a colourful function when the bride is allowed to sit in the centre and her companions round up in a ring form and a graceful dance in slow motion will be performed with songs of their traditional peals of joy but without musical instruments. This almost resembles the *Thiruvathira* popular among the Hindu women of Malabar. This is an inseparable function

connected with all Muslim marriages throughout the world which ultimately culminates in the wedding night.

This function of the Henna night will also be followed by a grand feast. The elderly members of the family with relatives join the function and shower their blessings with songs and gifts. This night is one of splendour and grandeur and is reserved specially for the unmarried girls of the family and the relatives to express their joy and jubilation.

The Keyi women observed strict discipline and decorum both in the family and in social relations. They are highly charitable particularly in the month of Ramzan. A particular amount of money, rice and clothes are distributed to the poor and needy especially to the widows and orphans.

As in the case of other Mappila women the Keyi women observed strict *pardah* system in accordance with the orthodox tradition of Islam and *Shariah*. Hence they never appeared in public as Namboodiri women of olden times in Kerala. Both the tenets of Islam and local practices must have influenced them for such an observation. Such a seclusion may be an important reason for not getting secular education amongst them, as the same plight suffered by the Namboodiri women till the middle of the 20th century¹⁵.

But the widows of the family enjoyed some what a comfortable position in the house, eventhough they observed the custom of *Idda* or *Marayirikkal*, an abstinence with veil, for about four months or till delivery if she is pregnant. She has to remove all ornaments and anything that which added to her appearance and has to wear

only white clothes. She is allowed to appear only before close relatives. As per the Islamic law and allowance, the widows were also allowed to remarry for getting a better life. Recently such strict observance of *Marayirikkal* is undergoing changes without insistence for the removal of ornaments and the wearing of white dress etc. with the infiltration of revivalist ideas of the *Mujahids* and *Jamate Islamis*. Some groups even say that a widow can even earn livelihood for her children by observing *Idda*, if she has no other alternative.

The Keyis are the strict adherents of Sunnism, a major sect of Islam, and the followers of Shafi School of Islamic jurisprudence. Their attachment with the religion is manifested in the construction of mosques, madraṣṣas and orphanages. The earliest mosques built by the Keyis are the *Thazhayile Palli*, *Oadathil Palli*. *Mughdar palli*, *Jam Jam Palli*, *Narangapuram Palli*, *Vadikkal Palli* etc., among which the *Oadathil Palli* is a monument of Moossa Kakka. It was built in a plot purchased from the East India Company and distinctively noted for its copper roofing with abundant use of teakwood. But *Thazhayile palli* was the first Mosque constructed by Aluppy Kakka the pilot and the pioneer among the Keyis, in the beach near his *Pandikasala* which also is having copper roofing. The tomb of him, his wife and his two sisters are found in front of the Mosque. Each mosque has its own Qazis paid by the family. An important monument of Keyis outside India is the *Keyi Rubath* at Mecca¹⁶, built by Mayankutty Keyi of Valiya Pura Tavazhi and donated as a choultry for Haj pilgrims from India. Such buildings were constructed by rulers of India like Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawab of Arcott for the Hajj Pilgrims of their regions. This clearly indicates the status of

the Keyis almost equal to some Muslim rulers of India and as the sole representatives of the Muslims of Malabar in South India. Though orthodox followers of the Sunni sect of Islam, religion never made the Keyis obscurantist. They were extremely tolerant and receptive to modern trends and English education which was brought by the British in Malabar, particularly when both the English and their education were opposed vehemently by a section of Mappilas in Malabar.

For the Keyis, religion was purely personal and in the social and political life, they treated religion secondary. During the Mysorean invasions, Moossa whole heartedly supported the English East India Company by men and money. Such an attitude of Moossa greatly helped the cause of Pazhassi Raja in his struggles in Malabar. Again religion did not persuade them to join with Tipu Sultan against the Company¹⁷. Another landmarking instance of his religious attitude could be seen in his help and support to the refugees during the invasion of Tipu Sultan in Malabar. He sent them to Travancore in his *Pattemars* (Small ships) which earned him great recognition from the Maharaja of Travancore who rendered him facilities for trade¹⁸. Moreover, in the encounters between the Company and the Arakkal Rajas, the Company always deputed Moossa as its mediator considering him as a true friend without religious prejudice¹⁹.

Another important aspect to be noted in the life style of the Keyis is that religion never obstructed them in following several local practices observed by the Hindus and other Mappilas. They include rituals and ceremonies concerning birth, death and ear boring, rituals in connection with the puberty of girls, construction of house

and house warming. They were also ardent believers in *Thachu sastra*. All the Keyi houses have a hanging lamp (Tooku vilakku) made of bronze, equivalent to the *Nilavilakku* often used in Hindu houses and in the Arakkal family of Cannanore.

Another ritual practiced by the Keyis is the sprinkling of rice in connection with the arrival of the newly wedded bride. They also observed the *Vellayum Karimpadavum* (the spread of white sheets and blankets) to receive the bridegroom on the occasion of the marriages. Such observances also remind us of the Hindu Nair practices in Malabar. Many rituals concerning death like that of the observances on the 3rd day, 15th day, 40th day, and *Andu Nerchas* are believed to have been bodily taken from local Hindu practices.

Sports and Pastime

Though strictly adhered to religion, the Keyis have a fancy towards sports and games. They not only encouraged, but even participated in most of the sports events in the locality. As a British-born item, the Cricket has become the most favourite of the sports among them even earning nicknames like 'Sixer Kunhipakki', a Keyi named Kunhipakki, who strike only sixers from Cricket pitch. Tournaments and Test series were also organised so prestigiously by inviting teams from distant places meeting all expenses with competitive and sportsman spirit. Thus with their patronage several Cricket Clubs arose in and around Tellicherry making her one of the major centers of Cricket lovers of Kerala. It is also reported that Arthur Wellesley, the later Duke of Wellington, played Cricket in the grounds of Tellicherry. C.P.Pocker Keyi who have even the captancy

and C.P.Kunhahammad Keyi were the others who encouraged Cricket in Tellicherry. The Keyis have a craze for Tennis also and they organized a Tennis Club in association with the English near the present day Stadium. The Keyis like P. V. Kunhi Moossa, C. K. Kunhipacki Keyi, C. K. P. Kaderkuty Keyi have organised the Tennis Clubs in and around Tellicherry. Others who have taken interest in Tennis were P. V. Cheriya Moossa and Adv. A. P. M. Moossa.

Dress, Ornaments and Food Culture

The Keyis, as the other Mappilas in their surroundings, absorbed elements of local practices ranging from dress habits to marriage practices. . The 'Tali' tying (ofcourse with slight variation) and the paying dowry to the bridegroom and purifactory ablutions after birth are only some of them. As any other typical Mappila Muslim, the Keyis also wore Malayali dresses including Shirt, Mundu (lower garment) and a cap, usually a white handwooven Mappila skull cap (This is specially made from Kasaragod area. It is worn after putting it in heavy starch and ironing in the shape of a boat). Almost all the Keyis wore an English coat and a tie or bow especially the distinguished ones. They also wore rarely fur and fez caps and the Turkey caps and the black Jinnah caps. The bridegroom's dress include a shirt with a *Mundu* over it, tightened by a belt, a black or light yellow overcoat, a white Mappila cap and a leather boot covering the whole feet. The attire of a typical *Karanavar* of a Keyi family is a sartorial splendour showing a tendency to be a half-European. They were very particular to put Muslim caps (Mappila, Turkey and Jinnah Caps) over the head, but never the bowler caps as the dignified

English did while they go out or in social gatherings. As the conventional English, they have a preference to black and light yellow colour, particularly in the case of overcoat and cap. Most of the dignified and status conscious Keyis are found very fastidious in their dress and appearance.

The Keyi women too have their own specialities as in the case of other aristocratic Mappila women. Their common dress include a white *Mundu*, a *Penn Kuppayam* (jacket with long sleeves stretching to the palm), and a *kasavu thattam* (a scarf). But this may vary as per occasions like marriages and festivities. In such cases they used to wear very colourful (usually purple or blue known as 'Ponchappam') and decorative lower garments with ornated borders, a head wear almost in the same pattern but with a different colour, and a jacket made of silk or satin with peculiar style of embroideries and handmade needle work. As in any society, the dress and ornaments were the status symbol for the Keyis, both men and women. The common dress of the women include a *Kaachi Mundu*, a white lower garment, with colored borders, worn like other Mappila women and the Koyas of Calicut. This is a speciality of Malabar Muslim women, particularly of the coastal areas.

The Keyi women showed an incredible craze for jewels of all sorts. The varieties of ornaments worn by the women of Keyis also display the prestige and status of their families. The commonest of the ornaments are the *Karakalla* (made of small black beads and gold), *Kallumala* (triangle shaped stones in various colours arranged with golden borders) usually known as *Makkathe kallu Mala*, *Chakkara*, *Kannimala*, *Ashtika*, *Dollarmala* and varieties of

necklaces. *Chavidi* (also known as 'galaminni' later) is a scorfula round the neck, *Kasumala* made of small gold coins, *Alochana mala* (comparatively lengthy and decorative), *Padimala* (with different layers and small square golden plates put in uniform intervals), *Pathappon* (with round designs) were all the desire of the rich and aristocratic. Varieties of bangles were popular like *Kannadivala*, *Parangivala*, *Karivala*, *Chathukku*, *Parangivala* and *Katon*. The names of these bangles were derived from the shape and designs in their surfaces. Since *Katon* is in larger size it was worn singularly and used only occasionally. *Murthilattam* is another old ear ornament now found extinct. The brides used additional ornaments like *Aranhanam* around the waist, *Padasaram* in the feet, *Mudichakram* over the hair, and *Nettippattam* in the forehead. The commonest ornaments wore in the lower ear by younger women and girls is the *Tuluki*, an overhanging ornament with pearls in combination of the routine stud. The more fashion conscious also wore an advanced form of it known as *Lolak* (more lengthy and with hanging pearls) now found popular among all fashionable girls universally, including in filmdom. Like the speciality of other Mappilas, the Keyi women wore *Alikathu* (small rings with glittering gold pieces) atleast seven in number on each upper portion of the ear. This is a prestigious ornament that declared richness and prosperity. Since they are hanging they are also known as *Nhali Alikkathu*. Usually the widows remove them in addition to the other ornaments when they observe *Iddah*. In the early period, the elderly, instead of the *Tuluki*, wore variations of small gold ornaments when the earlap is made large. They include *Kathilekuru* (small ring like ornaments to cover the



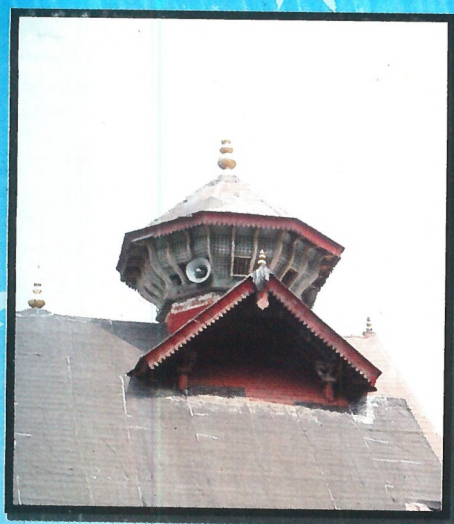
**Thazhale Palli - Built by Aluppy Kaka -
First Mosque of the Keyis (Renovated)**



**Tombs of Aluppy Kaka, his Wife & two Sisters
at Thazhale Palli**



Tombs of Moossa Kaka & his Wives
(one Tomb was demolished at the time of new construction)



KUBBA of Odathil Palli
with Golden Minars



Chandelier at Baby Mahal



ODATHIL PALLI Built by Moossa Kaka



ODATHIL PALLI - View from South gate



**Memory of Trade and heritage of Keyis.
The Pandikasalas - view from Tellichery pier**



**Inside view of a Keyi House - BABY MAHAL
Built by P. V. Kunhi Moossa Keyi. Now C. P. Aluppy Keyi's residence**

hanging earlap) *Komban* (only one in a ear in the top of the lap) and *Alanthody*, again only one hanging in the centre of the ear lap. But with the entry of new ornaments these traditional ornaments have almost disappeared. The prestigious families keep a *Swarna Chellam* (a decorated silver or brass banded rose wood box) to preserve their ornaments. Till lately the tradition bound Keyi women are found very slow in changing over to the modern fashions and jewels.

The food habits of the Keyis are note worthy as in the case of any other Mappila aristocrats. They find it a pleasure to invite friends and relatives and serve various types of food prepared by their women as a token of their extravaganza. Being free from many of the demoralising vices of the modern civilized life, they take delight in delicious foods. The innumerable items of prepared foods arranged for a dinner in a Keyi bungalow is a delightful scene to look at. They have pleasure and pride in feeding their guests who include the way farers and priests. They unflinchingly retained the egalitarian spirit of Islam and never make any discrimination among their guests whatever may be the ups and downs of their social and economic status. Whether tea-time or meals time, the Keyis make it a get together to the enjoyment of all. They sit either on colourful mats or beautiful carpets in the form of a ring-round with a maximum of ten by spreading a *Suppara* made out of painted palm leaf, the shape of which also is round, or a white cloth (in later period), a speciality of the Mappilas of coastal Malabar. The *Suppara* type eating also known as 'Maasara' in Calicut area, is arranged in a *Thana* (raised platform) of the Common hall..Dishes are served

mostly in plates made of coloured porcelain and imported glass ware which itself is an exhibition of their splendour and generosity. Though they have varieties of dishes they have a special fancy for 'Biriyani' (a preparation of fine rawrice like modern Basmati) with ghee and meat) especially in the dinner items, the introduction of which in Malabar is also claimed by them. Their main food include items prepared by rice, wheat, meat and fish along with vegetable salads, fruits and cooked desserts. A favourite sweet dish served often both for special occasions and festivals is the 'Vazhakkakari' or 'Pidikari' made of rice, banana and sugar, satisfying the purpose of more than a modern pudding or *payasam*. On special occasions like marriage, they prepare the West Asian speciality called *Alsa* (wheat porridge) now a common dish among Muslims. It is prepared by fine wheat, ghee and chopped mutton forming a balanced routine food to the rich and an occasional speciality to others. Like other Mappila Muslims of Malabar, the Keyis are specialists in preparing varieties of 'Pathiris' (rice-cake) which include from the ordinary 'Orotti' to the occasional '*Chattipathiri*'. Other varieties are *Neypathiri* (cooked in oil) *Vattipathiri* (baked) *Palarotti* (with the coconut milk) *Adukkupathiri* (in layers) *Erachipathiri* (fried with meat), *Anapathiri* or *Kakaroti* (prepared with meat), *Meenpathiri* (stuffed with fish).

Another noted side dish speciality is the '*Muttamala*', made out of egg, sugar and ghee prepared so colourfully and ornamentally on special occasions like '*Salkaram*' a follow-up get together of guests, usually after marriage or some other important event. The food calendar of the Keyis also include some other specialities like *Pancharapatta* (a crisp and layered wafer cake made of rice flour, sugar and ghee) *Unnakkaya* (stuffed banana rolls) *Kaiveeshal* (made

of Maida, egg and sugar) *Pulivaral* (made of rice flour, banana and jaggery prepared in the shape of tamarind), *Mutta Sirka* (made of rice flour, sugar and egg), *Kozhi nirachathu* (Stuffed chicken), *Taripola* (made of suji, egg and sugar), *Muttapola* (made as Taripola, but instead of Suji, maida will be used), *Kozhi Ada* (made of maida stuffed with meat preparation). Their favourite drink like any other Malayali is the tea. The lime tea and spicetea, an imported practice of Muslims from outside, are also popular. Special drinks include all types of fruit juices, shakes of *badam* (Almond) and rose milk. Another favourite drink of the Keyis is '*Tari Kanhi*' (gruel of rava or suji) made of suji, milk and sugar and *Jeeraka kanhi* (Cumin gruel) made of cumin seed, egg, coconut milk and fine broken rice. Both are considered Ramzan specialities.

The speciality of the Keyis is that they treat the guests with warmth, meticulous care and with their proverbial hospitality. They carry a food culture of gastronomy exhibiting with much delight and extravaganza. Though women are behind all such preparations and arrangements in the kitchen, their role and appearance in the forefront is nominal and often nil. But their participation in the nuptial feasts like that of *Mailanchi* is noteworthy. The recent innovations in food culture did not in any way affect the Keyis due to their staunch attachment to the habits of tradition. In brief the culinary culture of the Keyis still has a legacy of nobility and commonness of the Muslim community. Like the Mughal tradition, they have kept a food tradition but not westernised during the last two centuries. Their identity is maintained distinctively in all aspects of life in a wider world of Malabar Muslims.

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- 4) Vasudevan, n.1.P.2, See also A.P.Ummerkutty, *History of the Keyis (Mal)*, Tellicherry, 1916.
- 5) Robin Jeffrey, *Decline of Nair Dominance*, Newyork, 1976.
- 6) S.M.Mohammed Koya, *Mappilas of Malabar*, Calicut, 1983, P.62.
- 7) K.K.N.Kurup, *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, Calicut Univerity 2002, P.16. The Ottoman Emperor of Constantinople recognises her as a powerful Islamic ruler of the East eventhough her family follows *Marumakkathayam* against Islamic *Shariah* (See K.K.N.Kurup, Appendix III in *Ibid* PP.107-109).
- 8) Sreedhara Warier, *Marumakkathayam and Allied systems of Law in the Kerala State*, Cochin 1969, P.6.
- 9) Roland Eric Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*, Madras, 1976, P.251.
- 10) Logan, n.1, P.272
- 11) Kathleen Gough in Schneider and Gough (ed.) *Matrilinear Kinship*, Berkley, 1962, P.432.
- 12) *Ibid*, P.246.
- 13) Ilamkulam P.N.Kunhan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, Kottayam, 1970, Q.412.
- 14) *Court Proceedings* CC No.6, 1901 Exhibit.B, 12-3-01.
- 15) Ilamkulam, *op. cit.* P.121. See also his various chapters like "Brahmin population in Ancient Time" and "Education in Ancient Keala" and *The Jenmi system in Kerala (Mal)*, Kottayam, 1951
- 16) Major Macleod, *The Jamabandy Report of the Division of Coimbatore and the Province of Malabar* 18 Jan.1802, Para 67 P.12. See also K.K.N.Kurup, no.1, P.281.
- 17) Vasudevan, n.1. P.5
- 18) Ummerkutty, n.4. PP.22-24
- 19) Miller, n.9, P.251.

Chapter Five

FROM WAREHOUSE TO MANOR HOUSE

One special feature of the Keyis is that they are avowedly urban in life and life style, probably due to their closeness and attachment with the English. Formerly they lived in apartments adjacent to their warehouses, mostly in the upper portion, like other business classes of the west-coast namely the Konkanis and Gujaratis. Later on with the expansion of the family and owing to their increasing contact with the English they too built palatial houses of the bungalow type. In the construction of their bungalows, they abundantly used glass and wood. One such specimen building, a residence cum warehouse, could still be seen near the pier without much damage in the seashore of Tellicherry, known as *Kannadi pandikasala*, a warehouse for the glass brought from Belgium. The warehouse of sandal wood, known as *Chandana pandikasala*. Later on separate houses were built and the warehouses were exclusively utilised for storing commodities.

Being a leading trading house, the Keyis constructed a good number of large *Pandikasalas* or warehouses on the seashore of

Tellicherry, the remnants of which are seen even now there. Most of such warehouses are now used as offices and store houses both by the government and private enterprises. As mentioned earlier, in the initial period, such emporiums served the twin purpose of family dwelling in the upstairs and as centres of storages. These warehouses also contained vast areas as drying yards with proper fencing. Their proximity with the sea highlights the brisk trade and easy transaction of the merchandise shifting to the ships by using country boats. Unlike the *Pandikasala* found elsewhere, its windows are built by using coloured glasses making it a rare specimen and a relic of the Keyi heritage. Its size and configurations are slightly disparent from such store houses usually found in other coastal towns of Malabar like Calicut, Vatakara, and Cannanore. As referred to, some of them have a dual purpose of residence and storing. The upstairs of such warehouses were utilised for the dwelling of the families and hence elaborate arrangements were made for keeping a living standard for sufficient number of members with proper ventilation and space for easy mobility. Such a practice of 'upper storey living' must have been copied by the Keyis from other tradesmen like the Konkanis, Gujarathis, Borahs and Parsis who have their commercial hegemony from the late medieval period onwards in places like Bombay and Gujarat and in the coastal towns of Kerala. Such a life also provided them a sense of protection to their family and their goods, a good share of which was also kept in the open yard. The display of the procured products, a speedier transaction of the commodities, lack of easy transport and communication which also limited the mobility of both the owners and the customers, and the difficulty in shifting the merchandise without proper attention and supervision of the owners are some of

the positive factors to the growth of a residence-cum-storage system in the colonial situations. This system also reduces the problem of Watch and Ward promoting a high degree of security to both men and materials. Accumulation of wealth requiring more investments, lack of privacy and protection of women and children from the possible attack on warehouses are some of the causative factors responsible for the construction of new houses big or small. The shifting of the family from the warehouse, especially after its expansion and the building of new houses nearby, caused to the construction of a store house with a ground floor alone. Almost all warehouses are square shaped with store rooms in all sides with inside verandahs in four sides having close accessibility to *Nadumuttam* (Central courtyard) mainly serving the purpose of a ventilation and light and as a drying yard. This *Pandikasala* has only one entry with a large door in front facing the sea. This type of buildings require no compound wall or any fencing as a protective measure. Such a structure also saves the products from the unkind weather and decay, since they are close to the sea. A square building is so eco-friendly that it greatly resists comparatively all climatical pressures.

The storage rooms in the ground floor are very large like a containership and their doors are made in such a way that they can be closed in the course of the filling to get the maximum capacity for storage and finally the upper portion after filling the room completely. Like their houses, the Keyis constructed their warehouses with 'Tapas' in the front side (minimum two in both sides) serving the purpose of an open window with the provision of seats and an outlet for those who are sitting inside. `

All the buildings including mosques are constructed as per

the complete directives and advices of the local carpenter -chief whose role is unavoidable from the selection of the plot, making of the plans and till the completion of the building. The architectural splendour of each construction is to be determined by the abundant use of indigenous expertise with occasional infusion of European elements. The doors and windows of the frontal facade, the wide use of hanging Chandeliers both in mosque and houses the carved and designed staircases and handles are the superb examples of European and Saracen influences.

The residences of the Keyis are noted for their common features of very large size with a number of rooms, a large common hall with all facilities for entertaining any number of guests, an open Verandah and an extensive kitchen with ladies apartments. A typical Keyi house and household were emporiums of splendour and grandeur filled with wooden furniture of their own choice like couch, cot with *melkatti* (a caged cot specially arranged for the couples in *Maniyara* with projected wooden logs in the four corners supporting a wooden frame in the top and covered by a colourful transparent net like curtain), tables, Almirahs with beautiful carvings.

The outside open Verandah and an inner Verandah with two *Tinas* (raised laterite or rarely wooden platform) are the common features of such houses before entering into the common hall and from where to the other rooms. In most cases *Puram Tina* (outer Tina) and *Akam Tina* (inner Tina) are found. The other rooms in the ground floor include 'Chaipu (equivalent to the *Cherichu ketti* of the Nair *Taravad* or *Kizhakkini* and *Patinjattini* of Namboodiri *illams*) is often used as a bed room. The other rooms are *neetumuri*

proceeding to the Kitchen and *Naduvil Ara* (central room). The small rooms found close to it in two sides are called *Iruttaras* (due to darkness and lack of ventilation). The central room has only one door and is comparatively the smallest of the bed rooms in a house. The newly wedded couples will enter first into this room with the custom known as 'Arakoodal' or entry into the bed room. They will be using this room ritually for a few days or weeks and thereafter shift to a new room probably in the upstairs. This room is also used by betrothed girls till their marriage. The widows with the death of their husbands or the divorcee use the same room for the custom known as *Idda* or *Marayilirikkal* (sitting behind Veil) for about four months, certainly not to have contact with anybody other than close blood relatives.

An important part of the house is the kitchen called 'Neerayi'¹. A traditional smoke oven is arranged facing towards the East or the West. Since the family is compound and contain large numbers, the country oven of five or seven is arranged. Attached to the kitchen, a small bath is arranged exclusively for ladies and lady servants. Almost all women folk of the house spent the major share of their time in the kitchen either preparing food or aiding the servants in all matters concerning cooking and management.

All Keyi houses have two staircases, one in the inner Verandah and the other in the kitchen side. The staircase in the kitchen side is exclusively meant for the ladies for their entry in the top floor. It is comparatively small and less attractive. But the main staircase in the inner verandah is highly decorative with wood carving and designs. They are noted for pictorial representations and intricate

interlacing of wood carvings, especially the handles. Usually it is fixed on the 'Tina or on the wooden platform, the bottom of which serves a *Pathayam* or a mini storage apartment (a large chest to keep rice, paddy etc.) The rooms in the upstairs are very large with sufficient ventilation. They contain large doors and windows with coloured glass and designed glass pans. The rooms of a house are determined by the number of girls to be married.

The windows are of arched shape with carvings, and its shape, wood work and abundant use of glass remind us of the Victorian architectural splendour. The speciality of the windows found in the two sides of the front main door of a Keyi house is worth mentioning. Such windows in the left and right sides of the main door are of peculiar type having very large size called 'Tapa'. These windows have some peculiarities in size, opening and purpose. Unlike the other windows, their pans are divided horizontally and a portion of it often makes a bench to sit upon. Its width is half the measure more than its height. The wood works in all sides and in the bottom are superb and highly decorative. The speciality of this window is that it has no metal portions like hinges or bolt and all the joints are made of wood. Now a days the Tapas of the demolished old houses had a great demand by Architects as an Antique Attraction to Modern Houses, Resorts & Restaurants in cities like Bangalore, Chennai and Ernakulam.

The unavoidable article kept as a token of prestige in a Keyi house was 'Elathattu for the display of betel nut and arecanut, the counterpart of a *Vettilachellam* commonly used by the Nairs. *Thookku Vilakku* (hanging oil lamp serving the purpose of a

Nilavilakku) and *Kolambi* (Spittoon) are the other important and unavoidable articles in a Keyi house. All these are made of brass. *Kolambis* in different sizes and shapes are used not only for spitting but even to do minor ablutions and is compulsorily kept in all bedrooms particularly when the mobility of members in the house in the night was limited and when attached bathrooms were not in use. A *Kindi* (for keeping water) and a *Kolambi* were a must in all the *Aras* (room) or *Maniyara* (bedroom of the couple) in those days. Aristocratic houses also keep such other articles like the decorative silver or brass plates and rosewater pot, for the sprinkling of rice and rose water on the occasion of the first arrival of bride or bridegroom.

It is a fact that in the construction of houses, the Keyis have copied the pattern of Nair *Tarawads* since they too are matrilineal people. A traditional house is a symbol of one's social status and economic condition which also determines the social recognition of a group of people. The Keyis being an aristocratic class among the the Mappila Muslims of Malabar thus resorted to have palatial residences displaying the maximum available structural magnificence and architectural bonanza. But a very distinctive feature of a Keyi *Taravad* house is its happy combination of both the indogenous expertise as found in aristocratic Nair houses and the European style found in English bungalows. This marked difference could better be seen in the lavish use of glass, wood, large sizes of windows and doors, a facade and in the pattern of roofing. Small brick tiles called *Chiratta Odu* (tile resembling the coconut shell) in the top with flat square tiles in the bottom laid over the wooden planks were

the universal method of roofing of their houses. Later on other types of tiles were introduced. All floors have wooden ceilings with decorative carvings in the ground floor. The structure was made by using laterite and mortar with a mixture of lime, sand and water. For flooring both slabs of mortar and plain brick tiles were widely used. The pattern of structure and size underwent remarkable changes with the disintegration of the old Tarawads to the tastes and requirements of later generations.

Some of the Keyi houses of the early period have some inside windows known as *Kilivathil* (parrot window) attached to ladies' living rooms as found in some *Nalukettu* and *Namboodiri illams*. They are small windows usually without pans, but with fixed wooden sheets with a number of small holes, arranged in geometrical designs, so that the ladies can peep through the outside without seeing those who are sitting inside. Such peep through windows were also common in the Mughal *harems* (special apartment exclusively for ladies) and in some *Antapuras* (inside ladies rooms) associated with the royal houses in Kerala, particularly where *Natyasalas* (Dancing hall) were made. Similar windows are found even now in the Padmanabhapuram palace near Trivandrum (In Kanyakumari Dt.) in the sides of the *Natyasala* for the convenience of women who have not allowed to come and sit with others in the hall. Most of the Mappila houses of repute have such windows in yester years especially when their women folk were stuck to veiling, not in person but in the presence in public. Here we have to distinguish the system of seclusion of women in those days with the practice now prevalent among the Muslims of Kerala. The system then in practice was almost equivalent to that of the *Antarjanas* or Namboodiri women living in a Zenana wearing a lower garment

(mundu) and a long cloth covering the upper part of the body including head, (with an additional jacket in the case of muslim women) and moving with *mara* (viel) and *marakkuda* (an umbrella to hide themselves from the eyes of onlookers). But in recent times, among the Mappila Muslims, a drastic change could be seen in this practice, and instead they use a *Burqa*, a single piece of dress covering the whole body from the head to the toe, perhaps partly by the influence from the West Asian countries and partly due to the new Islamic revivalism or puritanism and also as a part of keeping identity.

The architectural desire of the Keyis found its sublime form in the constructin of mosques in different parts of Tellicherry. The best manifestations of their architectural skill could be seen in the construction of the prestigious mosque of the Keyis, Oadathil Palli, noted for its copper plate roofing, abundant use of wood, and attractive domes constructed by Moossa Kakka, the doyen among the early Keyis². Moossa Kakka purchased the land for the purpose of the Mosque from the Dutch Company. It was originally a Sugar-cane plantation of two acres of land on which this cathedral mosque (for Juma or Friday congregation) is built. Unlike other mosques built by the Keyis, the Oadathil Palli has a large *Vatilmadam* or *Padippura* with giant wooden pillars, now found almost decayed. The facade of the mosque also is partly tampered and an unsuccessful attempt has been made to cover up the dilapidated portions by concrete constructions causing deformity to the original buildings. This mosque is also noted for the extensive use of copper sheeting in the form of flat shingles to cover the roof, a tradition adopted from the medieval temple architecture of the region. These copper sheets are placed in such a way that it joints two wooden

planks to cover the joints and to protect the bottom from rain water seepages. They are also used for gilding the *Tazhikakkudams* (Small columns) or the pinnacles on the roof of the mosque. Most of such sheets are replaced now by tiles and concrete structures and domes because of corrosion and climatic damages. These *Tazhikakkudams* rest on the peak of the roof numbering three or five called the *Shikhara*. The *Mimber* (the pulpit from where the chief Qazi delivers Friday Sermons) in the Sanctum Sanctorum of the mosque is another notable art work of local artisans. The *Kalasa* pinnacles in copper are commonly used in almost all the mosques of Malabar from medieval period onwards showing its direct indebtedness to the Hindu style of temple architecture in Malabar.

The other important mosques are the Thazhayil Palli, Jam Jam Palli (constructed by the reputed Jam Jam Kunhammed Haji), Narangapuram Palli and the Mugadar Palli. The Thazhayile Palli was constructed by Aluppy Kakka when he was opposed to enter the Chalil Mosque of the Vaniambalath family, who have great grudge against the family of Aluppy since he was rising to be a great commercial rival to them in Tellicherry³. It was the first mosque of the Keyis of Tellicherry which also is noted for the roofing by copper sheets and wood works with intricate designs. The tombs of Aluppy and his sisters, his wife and nephews are believed to have been buried in a separate building in front of the Mosque. This Mosque is very close to their *Pandikasalas*. He appointed a separate Qazi there for his family.

The Mugadar Mosque is named after a renowned ship known as 'Mugadar' of Moossa Kakka which has returned miraculously with

much wealth amidst the stormy conditions in the seas. Later one of the nephews of Moossa, one Valia Kunhipacky Keyi (son of Beekutty, one of the sisters of Moossa) constructed a Mosque in the name of the ship mainly utilising the wood of the ship at Einthinkattil in the seashore ⁴ near the present day district courts.

In short the architectural contributions of the Keyis are visual splendours and superb manifestations of their religiosity, generosity and social status. All their buildings, whether residences or mosques or warehouses are totally free from the Indo-Saracen or Muslim style which made the chief characteristics of the architectural contributions of the Turkish Sultans and the Mughals of the North. At the most they were the blend of Kerala Style with a superficial touch of European bungalow style especially in the frontal elevation and facade where glasses and wood used lavishly in the making of windows and doors. Almost all of them are lofty two-storeyed buildings with austere nature built on an *adhistana* with a technology of the region probably due to the expertise of the indigenous and traditional masons and carpenters who knew only the local style of architecture and use of materials available in the region. Such a distinction is not merely the result of the physical forces or availability of regional elements, but is the consequence of a whole range of socio-cultural factors that moulded the Mappila Muslim culture of Malabar who were already integrated to the cultural milieu of Kerala. This curious but happy blend of indigenous and exotic elements clearly offers the exemplified cultural identity of Islam in Kerala explicitly giving the cultural interface in a diverse society living in shared experiences. The Keyis have their own contributions to this blending of cultures in Kerala.

Notes and References

1. The origin of the term is unknown and it is very popular only among the Mappila Muslims of Malabar using it colloquially. 'Neerali' for kitchen is given in the *Malayalam- English Dictionary* published by National Book Trust, Kottayam.
2. The Odathil Palli is now managed and administered by the members of the Keyi family and the burial ground there is reserved for the Keyis and those who have married from them. The tomb of Moossa Kakka his wife, his sisters, and close relatives are now found in a separate enclosure in the eastern side of the Mosque.
3. A.P.Ummerkutty, *History of the Keyis* (Mal), Tellicherry 1916,P.10. The authenticity of the work is questioned by several members of the later generations of Keyis.
4. This is one of the popular myths available among Keyis. Either Moossa or his successors might have been instrumental to the construction of this Mosque.

Chapter Six

TOWARDS DISINTEGRATION

With more than two and a half centuries of rich traditions and cultural nuances, the Keyis kept their identity in all spheres of Kerala life. A quest for identity in the transitional period, particularly with the disintegration of the *Taravad* system, could also be marked with conflicting interests of tradition and Modernity. This is expressed more in their life style, taste, architecture, approaches to modern education and employment, and attitude to modern way of life. This was the experience of any tradition bound feudal society in its transformation into a modern urban system of life. Ofcourse the Keyis too faced, though not a 'social civil war'¹ atleast frustration and family disillusionment with the breakup of *Taravad* causing internal dissensions, particularly with the disappearance of powerful *Karanavars* of their houses. Some of the selfish *Karanavar* became more self interested to keep their own wife and children more economically safe and socially secure by utilising the property and income of the joint family which ultimately resulted in conflicts.

As in the case of Nairs, the joint family system of the *Taravad* provided the base of the Keyi family system forming a social

cohesiveness among them. During the time of Aluppy Kakka and Moossa Kakka they could control the whole *Taravad* under the patronage of the English Company with their protection and hegemony. Since the *Taravad* began to grow various *Tavazhis* emerged which later became the foundations of several *micro taravads*. Formerly a conservative *Karanavar* could "confer grace on the basis of his personal pleasure or displeasures"² on account of the traditional authority he held as a benevolent ruler of the family. The family was built up on collective interests and co-operation of the members and with the recognition of the *Karanavar* as the supreme head and authority. It survived fundamentally unchanged for about a century. The break down of such a system was due to an increase in the number of the family members and the accumulation of property including liquid cash. This also unavoidably resulted in the dispersion of family members and disputes with regard to the possession of property and the money acquired by the head of the family. New land relations, commercial monopolies, the encouragement of European planters, the vigorous programmes of growth stimulated by cash economy and above all the European egalitarian ideas that crept into the family and social system cracked the heirarchical order managed by older generations.

Moreover, the unity and cohesion of the *Taravad* depended on the *Marumakkathayam* system has been accepted by the Keyis as an intact system of inheritance. It is a fact that even when the *Taravad* was declining and forming into various *Tavazhis*, the matrilineal system continued among all of the *Tavazhis*, and instead of one maternal uncle several such uncles sprang up from different

units of *Tavazhis*. This was an accepted social system among all people, except some Brahmins in Malabar. The logic of its earliest existence in human history has been examined by writers like Mc Lennan, Morgan and Engels and have concluded that matrilineal system was the 'common basis of inheritance and succession and the patrilineal system evolved only later' ³.

The anxiety and fear of such a move could be seen in the course of the partition and in the attempt of installing separate homesteads in the neighbourhood by the rival and competitive successors, virtually by the nephews of the younger generations. Ofcourse the partition and its complexities have been counter balanced by the freedom which every shareholder obtains to improve his share. Further, the socio-economic realities of the late colonial period justified the situation to overcome the misfortune of its decline. The seeds of disintegration of the Keyis could even be traced back to the days of Moossa Kakka which became inevitable with his demise in 1806⁴.

There is also sufficient reason to believe that Marumakk-athayam as a system was adopted by the Mappila Muslims of Malabar from Nairs by way of conversion⁵. Another version almost corroborates this opinion when it says that this was a practice followed by all social groups in Kolathunad as a law of the land and hence the Mappilas too had practiced it⁶. Thus the Arakkal Muslim royal family of Cannanore and the aristocratic Keyis of Tellicherry followed the same. The Nair -Muslim conversion theory also holds good and strong on account of other practices followed by the Mappilas of the region like the marriage customs including the tying

of the *tali*, dowry of the bridegroom and the matrilineal system of residence. The use of the traditional brass lamp either *Thookkuvilakku* (hanging lamp) or *Nilavilakku* (pedestal lamp), the *Bhadradeepam* of the Hindus, extensively used by the Muslims of Malabar, is also a positive indication of the absorption of Hindu practices.

The younger generations in course of time, opposed the Matrilineal system due to ill-will towards their *Karanavars* and with the desire to have the share of their properties, highlighting it as against the *Shariah* Law of Islam. Islam and the *Shariah* as a rule stick on to patrilineal system and that is universally accepted by Muslims throughout the world. Such a claim also has been supported by the incoming revivalist and reformist tendencies of Islam in Kerala during this time. The reformers decried the system 'unIslamic and a copy' from Hindus locally. But apart from such religious pressures, the Keyis like other Mappilas never gave up the system fully, even when they switched over to patrilineal system. We have several such examples and incidents as reflected in the judicial verdicts in cases like that of Koyyotan Soopi Vs. Kalliani and Abdurahman Vs. Avvoma, which also confirmed the prevalence of matrilineal system⁷ without infringing the rights and privileges of the Marumakkathayis in both *Tarawad* properties and agricultural lands.

Social resurgence due to the spread of modern education, urbanisation and absentee' land holding system was an important causative factor to its decline and the consequent disappearance of the *Tarawad* system and the *Tavazhis*. The hold and influence of the Keyis over the Company also was slackening, particularly with

the change of power from the Company to the Crown by 1858. Moreover, the succeeding generations of the Keyis were not able to win over the complete confidence from the Britishers as rulers of the region.

The solid capital acquired by people like Moossa found a colossal decrease especially when his successors invested a major portion of such liquid money in the purchase of land which never gave a substantial return to their investments. This further created a class of 'absentee' landlords who were sitting idle with unproductive dispositions and becoming instrumental to destroy every thing acquired in the past. The descendants of Moossa also looked upon matriliney and its socio-economic features as an impediment to individual growth and attainments giving way to the much more desirable patriliney sanctioned by the tenets of Islam.

Within a little more than a century, the Keyi family showed tendencies of division and disintegration perhaps due to its unwieldy expansion and complexities of the *Marumakkathayam* system. Since the members of the family increased, they were obliged to divide and subdivide with the result that there arose about ten branches. The noteworthy fact with regard to this is, that the divisions all took place on oral agreement⁸. Chovakkaran Aluppy Kakka, the first settler among the Keyis, started to stay at Tellichery with his two sisters probably in the last quarter of 17th century. The first known *Tarawad* house of the Keyis initiated by Aluppy was Orkkatteri from where several branches later sprang up. After Aluppy, Bappankutty, son of his sister Pathumma, became the *Karanavar* of the family of Valiya Orkkatteri. After his death, as per an agreement reached at by

members, it was further divided into four *Tavazhis* headed by the senior most among them. The beginning of the major divisions of the house took place during the time of Moossa Kakka itself, and the major division of the Orkkatteri house into four branches with his demise in 1806. The 1st separate *taravad*, an offshoot of Orkkatteri was the Valiyapura constructed by Valiya Makki Kakka, the son of Kakkachi Umma, the sister of Moossa. The next and equally important *taravad* was Keloth began by Valiya Kunhi Packy Kakka, the son of Beekutty, another sister of Moossa. Though such divisions were made on residential conveniences proper division of the property was not made in effect which was still managed by a single *Karanavar*, the senior most of the families.

The *Karanavarship* of the family after Moossa went into the hands of Valiya Makki his nephew and successor at Valiyapura⁹. The next major *Tavazhi* was Puthiyapura, originated through Bavachi, son of one of the sisters of Moossa and who constructed a house in that name. Hence by the demise of Moosa, four major and permanent *Tavazhis* are seen in the history of the Keyis of Tellicherry. They are (1) The original Valiya Orkkatteri (2) Valiyapura (3) Keloth (4) Puthiyapura. All the other minor *tarawads* later have been originated from these four major *Tavazhis* often resulting in a breakup as a result of marital relations or by instituting new houses by junior members or nephews.

With the death of Valiya Makki at about 1808 (985 M.E), Valiya Kunhipacky Keyi became the *Karanavar* of the combined *taravads* of the Keyis. He had a long period of 22 years as the head of the families and died in the year 1830 (1007 M.E). He too had the rare

privilege of getting such name and fame as the builder of a trade empire of both inland and overseas. Valiya Kunipacky was the first among the Keyis to get the title 'Keyi' meaning the 'owner of a ship' in Persian language. This was also used as term of respect to salute all members of the family. Ofcourse, Kunhipacky Keyi had several ships plying to the west upto the Red sea and Mediteranean and to the South East Asia upto Malacca Islands. We have several evidences of the commercial contacts of Keyis in the coromandal coast, particularly with the port towns of Tuticorin, Masulipatam and in the west coast of India like Alapuzha, Cochin, Mangalore, Bhatkal, Bombay and Surat, revealing the trade empire that the Keyis built in association with the English at Tellicherry in the colonial period. William Logan refers Mr.Duncan and Major Dow who proceeded to Cannanore to enquire into the alleged mortgage of the Laccadiv Islands to Chovakaran Moossa and the land taken from the Beebi by the Chirakkal Raja¹⁰. This is only one of several incidents that reveals the economic strength and political influence of Moossa and his successors with the colonial powers like the English. Moreover when there was some internal dissensions in the Chirakkal Tavazhi, the English deputed " the influential Mappila merchant Chovakkaran Makki" "to ensure peace and harmony in the family"¹¹.

As traders the Keyis are found most trustworthy and sincere so that Britishers entered into several agreements with them. When others including rajas conceded pepper and sold it for Rs.235 per candy, "Moosa supplied for Rs.160 per candy, with a nominal profit"¹². There is also an instance of the English who sided with Moossa when he filed a suit against Murdock Brown for realising a debt of

Rs.30,750 from him as the price of five hundred candies of pepper¹³ This clearly shows that Moossa and other business magnates of the Keyi family were so agreeable to the East India Company and in almost all affairs Moossa and his family also depended on the Company.

What we could see by the demise of Moossa is the gradual decline of the trade empire built by him and a sudden decrease in the wealth and prosperity of the family. The period of his successors practicing as *Karanavars* was one of dissensions and disintegration. They were losing their control over the trade on which they prospered all along, and also the grip over the family, as a result of the new socio-economic changes that occurred in the mid-nineteenth century. The Company itself changed its position from traders to administrators.

With the transfer of power to the crown, the East India Company also lost its old importance as a trading agent and the Viceroy's rule greatly minimised the role of the Company in the colonies. The Industrial Revolution began in England also changed the nature and articles of trade and a new shift was experienced in the requirements of the post revolutionary England. The colonial rivalry and wars, particularly between the English and the French, adversely affected the traders and the traditional trade patterns of the West Coast. Such an economic climate also gave a lot of pressure on the Keyis who could not absorb or withstand the changing circumstances in the colonial context.

Though different houses and *Tavazhis* have emerged, the property of the family and the status of the 'uncle' continued till the

end of Cheriya Makki Keyi who became the *Karanavar* in 1830. He occupied that position for seven years. He is believed to have married the 3rd daughter of Moossa Kakka and the house constructed for his wife and children is called Acharath Parakkat. He was the last *Karanavar* of the united family of the Keyis. Among the divided families Keloth was the largest. Kunhammed Keyi of Keloth house was a noted and reputed member among the Keyis. He had three wives including an Arab and for all of them separate houses were built by him. It was Kunhammed Keyi who did some renovative work on Oadathil Palli originally constructed by Moossa Kakka and fixed the golden domes over it.

As we have seen already, the unity of the *Taravad* did not last long. The conflict among the nephews and uncles of different *taravad* reached to a climax which ultimately ended in the partition of the property finally in 1839 A.D. The divided Orkkatteri house was further divided by forming the house of Cheriya Orkkatteri and Thazhath. Keloth also was subdivided into Puthiya Malika, Valoth and Taiparakkat (both now extinct). In Puthiya Malika lived Kalanthiumma, the neice of Valiya Makki Kakka and her children. Mammad Keyi had the honour, to have 'Khan Bahadur' from the British. Later Cheriya Mammu Keyi of this house became the leader of the Indian Union Muslim League in Kerala. He was also a social activist and an educationist of repute associated with Darussalam Orphanage of Tellicherry, Cannanore District. Muslim Educational Association which runs a 1st Grade Arts and Science College, a college for Teacher Education and an Institute of Technology and several institutions in and around Cannanore district. C. O. T.

Knnlipacky of Chovvakkaran Orkatteri Thazhath house was also an educationist who later became a member of the Kerala Public Service Commission.

Another major *taravad* originated with the partition of 1839 was Valiyapura occupied by Kakkachi, sister of Moossa Kakka and her children. Ussankutty the nephew of Moossa was the head of the family who later married from Arakkal Royal house¹⁴ of Cannanore and earned the title *Elayav* or *Elaya*. Makki Keyi of this house, also is noted for his marriage with a lady of the 'Vaniambalath', a traditional rival house of the Keyis, against the injunctions of the founder Aluppy Kakka. Mayankutty Elaya another member of this house who also married from Arakkal was considered to be one of the earliest religious reformers of this region by his famous translation of Quran with interpretations. He made hundreds of Arabi-Malayalam manuscripts of Quran and circulated among the people free of cost when such translations were considered impious and irreligious by the orthodox Muslims¹⁵. During the period of his visit to Mecca, he also built a rest house for the Malayali Haj pilgrims there known as *Keyi Rubat* even now functioning well in Soudi Arabia. This *Tavazhi* also is almost in extinct.

Puthiyapura was another house began with Cheriya Bappan Kutty Keyi, the grand nephew of Moossa, which also is now found in extinct. Another noted house of the Keyis is Payyarambath (Pazhaya Parambath) originated from one of the sisters of Aluppy, the ancestor who does not find a place in the monograph of A.P.Ummerkutty on the Keyis written in Malayalam. This may be because of the rivalry found in many Tavazhis. The house again

was subdivided into Pazhukath and Pazhaya Malika. The existence of some houses of these branches even today are living testimony of these *tavazhis*.

Thus partition among the traditional Keyi families became a continuous process on account of rivalry among the members and to enjoy the shares of the ancestral property. As long as the *taravad* was undivided, the property also was undivided. But with the division of the ancestral properties the new *taravads* emerged with new names and the system of division went on uninterruptedly. The disintegration of the Keyis still continues, but without a branch name or any claim on property. This may partly be due to the observance of exogamy and partly by the considerable decrease in the volume of their properties. Another important cause for such disintegration without much material gain is the wide spread acceptance of patriliney and micro family system arose out of education and modernism. When the volume of the family property gradually decreased, the significance and necessity of the *Karanavars* also was at the minimum. Unlike the joint family where the *Karanavar* acted as all in all the newly emerged patriarchal families worked under the patronage of the father who acquires and owns everything to his family which contains his wife and children alone. The old *Karanavar* stands only as a titular head on special occasions like marriage, birth and death etc. His has become a ritual and nominal status.

Moreover, as referred earlier, The Keyis of the later period virtually became absentee landlords on account of their investment of the capital on land consequent on the decline of the lucrative trade they had previously. Such land holdings did not give them

proper return to their investment and that made them further lazy and lethargic as of Namboodiris of yester years. The new generation lost the commercial acumen of their predecessors and this easy-go-lucky landlords depended on their tenants about whom most of them have no knowledge. Moreover, they led a life of ease and luxury floating on the wealth of their ancestors and living in palatial houses. Again, while there had been great increase in the number of heirs there was no corresponding increase in the property to be shared by them. The *Karanavars* who managed the property were constrained to reduce the daily allowances allotted to the family members who later protested against them¹⁶. This created a lot of friction and tension among the members of the older and younger generations which resulted ultimately in the further partitioning of family properties.

The Mappila Marumakkathayam Act of 1939, was a great boon for them because it allowed the partition of *Tarawad* properties among its members in accordance with the Islamic *Shariah* law. This was a major event in the case of solving property issues among wealthy Mappila Muslims including the Keyis. Series of partition suits were filed and its number overwhelmingly increased in 1940s and 50s. The verdicts on some suits clearly reveal the complex situations and the interference of the courts to solve the issues by appointing receivers and commissions. A suit filed against Mammali Keyi of Puthiyapura in 1950 which allotted only sixty rupees as *Mukthiarnama* (allowance for daily expenses) is a fitting testimony to illustrate the condition of the day. Most of the traditional *Tarawad* houses which have got immunity from partition in former years were also subjected

to such misfortunes possibly due to the lack of farsightedness of some members. The Chovvakkaran Keloth Puthiyamaliammal house recently met with such a misfortune of demolition.

It is true that the spread of education among the Keyis led them towards professionalism in the early 20th century. Most of them went to the study and practice of law since they are intimately connected with landed properties and also with the feeling that they could not live with the meagre income of rent from land or building. By the middle of 20th century a good number of the Keyis acquired educational qualifications to get into government services including legal and civil services. Some prominent Keyis have acquired modern education and entered into government services. C.O. Aluppy Keyi was the first Munsiff among the Keyis in the Madras Government Service. C.P. Abdulla Keyi was a District Judge who retired from Kerala Service. T. M. Abdulla Sahib, S/o Makki Keyi, also was a District Judge who formerly had the status of a Colonel in the British Military Service. Another noted Keyi was P. V. Kunhi Moosa who also was honoured as Honorary Magistrate between 1945 and 1955. T. T. P. Abdulla, S/o Aluppy Keyi, also was DGP in Madras Service who later became a diplomat working as the Indian Ambassador in Saudi Arabia. C. P. Mammoo Keyi was the first Municipal Chairman among the Keyis Tellicherry. T. M. Moidu, a member of the Keyi family had the privilege of becoming the Chairman of Malabar District Board who later was instrumental for the construction of the present Moidu Bridge now in the Tellicherry - Cannanore. A. P. M. Mohammed Hanish, the present District Collector of Eranakulam is also a dignitary from among the Keyi families of Tellicherry.¹⁷ By the end of

the 20th century, what we could see is, the blooming of a good number of educated professionals among the Keyis ad lawyers, teachers, physicians and other government employees. But as in the case of other Mappilas, the general trend among the Keyi women is that they never went beyond elementary education since employment never found a space in their dream. The gulf boom of 1970s also served a solace in the case of a good number of the Keyi youngsters who were struggling to face the new socio-economic situations. Like many of the erstwhile ruling families in Kerala, the rich trading house of the Keyis also has its decline and disintegration. But even now the Keyis represent a rich commercial legacy and aristocracy in Malabar.

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Chapter Seven

CONCLUSION

A study of the Keyis of Malabar would naturally bring certain important conclusions with regard to the emergence of a mercantile house in association with a colonial power which determined the socio political aspects of a region for more than two and a half centuries. The history of this noteworthy and jubilant house provides a good example for the rise of a capitalistic merchant house during the political ascendancy of English East India Company in Malabar. Its rise and growth constitute a brilliant chapter of hectic political and commercial activities that energised both the colonizers and the colonized. This illustrious house of the Keyis had been much indebted to the Company for its economic growth and political influence when the local rajas were struggling among themselves for their own existence. No such commercial family is found in Malabar with an uninterrupted history of co-existence with mutual understanding and co-operation lasted for a period over two centuries. As wealthy traders and landed aristocrats they stand distinct above the other Muslim families of Malabar. No doubt that the Keyis flourished in trade and commerce by utilising the capital of the

Company based on contract system and monopolistic supply of commodities. Their trade empire extended from the Red Sea in the West to the Malayan archipelago in the East. Apart from Malabar, their properties were situated in Travancore, Cochin and all the important port towns of the west coast including Mangalore, Bhatkal, Surat and Bombay, and even in Soudi Arabia in West Asia.

The capital accumulated by the house through maritime trade was invested in landholdings like many other mercantile families in Calcutta and Bombay. As landholders, they always supported the British Raj. It is true that the history of Malabar in the late colonial period had been radically changed by the external historical forces than by the internal. The native rulers like Kolathiri in North Malabar were exposed to the colonial competition on the one side and internal invasions and dissensions on the other. The establishment of Tellicherry factory was a major event which determined the historical forces of the region. Simultaneously with the external colonial pressures, Malabar was subjected to internal migrations from Mysore under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan which did not create any marked change as in the case of the English in Malabar. Moreover, the traditional principalities like Kolathunadu (Chirakkal), Kottayam, Kadathanad the Iruvazhinad Nambiar, Kurungottu Nair and comparatively a major power the Zamorin of Calicut could not resist the incoming Mysoreans on various reasons beyond their control which finally resulted in the total failure and further fragmentation of these powers. It also created extreme law and order situation in the region inviting other external powers to interfere in their internal affairs atleast to maintain the status quo that prevailed before the

Mysorean onslaught. The English settlement of the region also was looked upon as a blessing in disguise, for it provided the much required security and protection to the people and to the rajas who were found almost in the border of extinct. Logan's observation on the situation in Malabar with the Treaty of Seringapatam clearly annotates the precarious political situations that prevailed in the region. He says,

As the cession of Malabar, ... to the British by the Treaties of Seringapatam, dated 22nd February and 18th March 1792, the country was found to be split into a number of kingdoms and principalities, a prey to the bigotry of its late Mahammadan conquerors, abandoned by its principal land holders, and distracted by the depredation; and rapacity of the Mappila banditti¹.

Though Logan's observation is partly partisan, exaggerated and subjective, it invites the attention of an impartial observer who seeks some solace in the British occupation and its administrative system on which most of the local rajas have greater dependancy. The deputation of General Abercromby, the Governor General of Bombay, to enquire into the present state of the country immediately after the Treaty, itself is a best manifestation of the English attitude towards the local rajas in the course of their colonization. We have already seen the context of Aluppy's migration to Tellicherry who himself was in search of better fortunes in the coastal settlement of Tellicherry. The English in return also provided maximum facilities for trade and security for their properties. Almost all early members of the family followed the policy and tactics of persons like Aluppy

and Moossa with utmost intelligence and dynamism to carve out a prosperous and trading empire in the West Coast of India. The cordiality of the early Keyis with the English also provided them a substantial amount of capital advanced to procure large quantities of pepper, copra and cardamom. This kind of an accumulation of capital and its role as a pre condition of colonialism has been explained by writers like Rosa Luxemburg who defined imperialism as "the political expression of the accumulation of capital in its competitive struggle for what still remains open of the non-capitalist environment"². The British imperialism in the Indian context thrived and flourished basically on merchant capitalism functioned reciprocally with the mutual benefit of the colonizers and the colonized.

It is also clear that such economic resources could not come out of the savings from the incomes of the small capitalists generated by the petty mode. It came only out of massive 'primitive' or 'primary accumulation,' that is, out of wealth and resources acquired from non-capitalist sectors and economies³. If colonialism is a "product of the monopoly phase of capitalism" the English were able to gain it more effortlessly with the aid of local forces and the situations found in Malabar.

Again, there were tight competitions among the contractors to procure stipulated quantity of commodities to supply the required volume to the factory. If any failure occurred in the supply, they are compelled to pay proper compensation to the Company. Such new pattern of contractual trade system introduced by the Europeans have opened up fresh facilities to trading houses like that of the

Keyis. Thus eminent merchant magnates of the family like Moossa, Makki, Bappan, and many others entered into commercial contract with the Company. There were also instances of stiff competitions and commercial rivalries among merchants which finally resulted into several encounters. Apart from pepper and other spices, the supply of timber also was undertaken by them eventhough the transportation of timber was not as easy as other goods. Moreover, the demand for timber at Bombay for ship building was considerable and the Company could profit heavily by its supply. The merchants of Bombay also thereupon saw the chance of making large profits and sent down 'oceans of rupees' to Malabar⁴. But the difficulty lay in providing the elephants to carry the logs to the coast. Here also Moossa and his men came to the help of the Company providing sufficient number of elephants and with all other facilities. This was also particularly at a time when all attempts to setup a saw mill at Beypore to supply plank to the Company, and all other schemes of Bombay administration over Malabar became, a failure⁵. Though merchants like Murdock Brown had influences everywhere in the province and in trade transactions in timber, coffee, cotton, pepper and other spices, and complete favour of the Company, he could not get the credibility that Moossa and his men had in the Company. Again between 1790 and 1793 Moossa also got an opportunity to prosecute Brown for a debt of Rs.30,750/-, the price of 500 candies of pepper, in which Robert Taylor supported Moossa's case and the Court found in his favour⁶. Brown's quarrel with Moossa also made it difficult "to preserve his independant position in the province"⁷ and he even earned a bad record of cutting down a thousand trees in the territory of Iruvainad Nambiars⁸.

Chovakkaran Pazhukkath Aluppy Keyi (d. 1933) was so famous that the pepper he exported to Europe, and America was known as 'Tellicherry Pepper' which earned him the title the 'The Pepper King'. The Company in Malabar got a new dimension with the arrival of new powers like USA with commercial motives giving an enhanced price for the commodities which also reduced the chances of the contractors of the factory. The entire policy of the factory was to procure half of the produce of pepper from the cultivators on a reduced rate of Rs.100. This semi monopoly system in fact brought out more competitions from traders like the French who had by this time made a footing at Mahe and its interiors including Peringathur which supplied maximum pepper and spices in the region lying on the banks of Mahe river and reaching upto Kuttiadi ghat. As observed by Ashin Das Gupta, it was pepper and its monopoly that "helped the rise of one Mopla merchant of Tellichery to sudden and spectacular affluence"⁹. The suzerainty of Moossa in the coastal trade also could be seen when he challenged the right of the King of Cochin to tax his ships proceeding to Mocha in the South West coast of Arabia, and in Moossa's threat of bringing an English army, if the Zamorin is ventured to interfere in his timber trade¹⁰.

But by the dawn of 19th century, the whole situation changed in the global level. The British colonial system also underwent drastic changes transforming themselves from traders to masters. This transformation also made them into a more secure and powerful position among the other colonial powers. The underlying changes in the colonial system brought Malabar also into new dilemmas with

heavy damages to the trade aspirations of the house of Keyis. A policy shift that the British pursued particularly in the import and export of commodities adversely affected the prosperity of the house. The trade to which they mainly depended on as the main source of income suddenly dwindled and they were compelled to search for new courses. The security and order that the Company offered were not so cheap or priceless and hence the natives have to pay more heavily for it justifying the much acclaimed 'Pax Britanica' as 'Tax Britanica' in the Indian experience¹¹. The colonial expansion and its intervention in the native trading system compelled the Keyis also to invest their surplus capital on land and buildings making them 'absentee landlords'

After the demise of Moossa, the subsequent family heads gradually showed tendencies to withdraw from trade and began to manage land and allied matters. Thus this trading house soon became one of landed gentry, as the Nair landlords of the region, never taking a course of capitalistic mode of production. They never attended either to the time tested models like that of the plantations of Murdock Brown or to follow the same line of the newly emerged companies like Parry & Co., Pierce Leslie and Harrison Crossfield.

Moreover, the monolith of the *old,tarawad* system soon disintegrated and different *tavazhis* sprang up with mutual jealousy and rivalry with continuous contest for the control of resources acquired by their ancestors. As landholders they always supported the British Raj. The long standing 'cultural baggage'¹² also did not allow them to go for higher English education and to grab the new horizons of professionalism. But by the middle of the 20th century,

the situation found a new turn with the rise of a professional group, though negligible, among them and by the gulf boom that crept into Malabar by the beginning of 1970s.

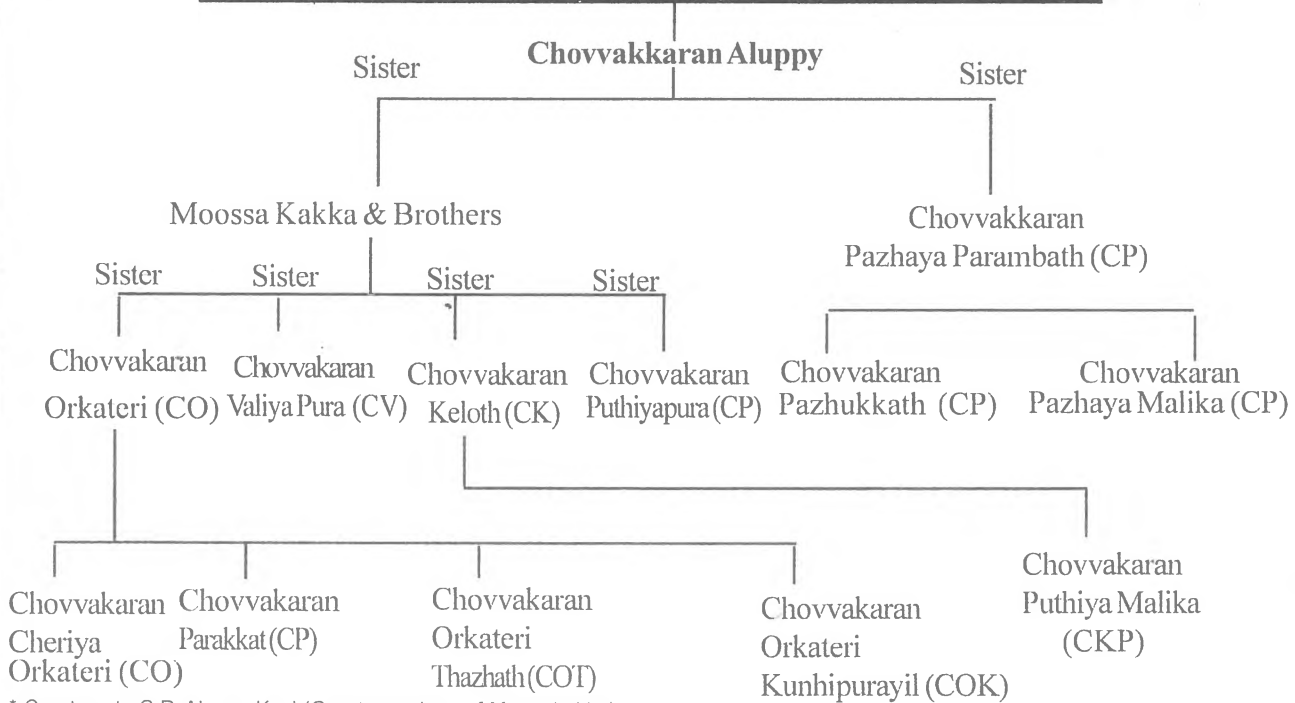
The study of the Keyis of Malabar is a rich academic experience for the scholars who engage in the study of merchant capitalism in the formative years of the British Power in Malabar. It gives a model of how a traditional house transforms into a rich and aristocratic family of traders in association with the colonial power like the English but at the same time reluctant to accept the new trends of changes available before them for further expanse and to face fresh challenges. No doubt that the Keyis came to prominence in Malabar by their industry and ingenuity. Integrity of character and humility of approach endeared them to their benefactors and their dependants. They were proud but not snobish, religious but not intolerant, conservative but not obscurantist. They were always dignified but were never haughty and it is this tradition of nobility and adherence to discipline that accorded them in a place of honour and recognition in a pluralistic society as that of Malabar.

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APPENDIX

THAVAZHIS OF THE KEYIS OF ALABAR *



* Courtesy to C.P. Aluppy Keyi (Great grandson of Moosakakka)n

GLOSSARY

Alikkath	:	An upper ear ornament speciality of Mappila Muslim Women, denoting nobility. e.g., 'Nahali Ali Kathu'.
Andu Nercha	:	Yearly commemorative religious festival.
Aranjanam	:	An ornament around the waist.
Biriyani	:	Rice prepared with meat and ghee.
Bankasal	:	A warehouse
Burqa	:	A single piece of dress worn by the Muslim women all over the world, Veil.
Chellam	:	A decorated box made of wood and metal as in <i>Swarna Chellam, Vettilachellam</i> .
Chiratta Odu	:	Tile resembling coconut shell.
Elaya	:	The younger one, often in a <i>Tawazhi</i> .
Elayav	:	A member of a Keyi family married from Arakkal house, Cannanore.
Idda	:	The waiting period a woman observed after the death of her spouse or a divorce, during which she may not marry, based on the Quran 2 : 228 and 2 : 238. The waiting period after a divorce is three months, and in the case of the death of a spouse, it is four months and ten days. Any pregnancy discovered during this period is assumed to be the responsibility of the former husband.
Illam	:	House of a Namboodiri; Mana.
Kakka; Kaka	:	An elderly person or Karanavar. An honourific title applied to Mappila Muslims of Malabar; originally Gujarati term indicating respect and a mode of Salutation as in Sidharth Kak or Sarat Kak. A variation 'Ikkaka' is now popularly used by Mappila Muslims as in Abdulla Kakka Ahmed Kaka etc.
Kanji	:	Gruel.

Karanavar	:	Maternal uncle; an important title in the Marumakkathayam system of inheritance or joint family popular among Nairs, Mappilas and a Section of Tiyas.
Kannadi Pandikasala	:	A warehouse with glasses
Keyi	:	A Persian word denoting 'owner of a vessel.'
Kuppayam	:	A jacket with long sleeves.
Kindi	:	A pot for keeping water with a tail to pour. Unavoidable in a Taravad for all functions.
Kolambi	:	Spittoon.
Mailanchi	:	Henna, A herbal preparation or paste to colour the palm and feet of a bride particularly in the previous day of the marriage (Mailanchi Night)
Makkathayam	:	Patrilineal system of inheritance.
Marumakkathayam	:	Matrilineal system of inheritance followed by Nairs, Mappilas etc.
Mala	:	A garland; here an ornament as in <i>Kallumala, Makkathemala, Alochanamala</i> .
Mappila Topi	:	A Typical cap used by the local Mappilas of North Malabar.
Mappila or Moplah	:	A Muslim with an Arab origin or progeny of an Arab in a local woman.
Mimber	:	Pulpit in a mosque from where the Khazi delivers the Friday sermon.
Mundu	:	A lower garment for men and women and popular among Malayalis.
Natyasala	:	A dancing hall.
Nikah	:	Marriage
Odu	:	Tile
Oppana	:	A Mappila group song sung by girls in marriage occasions with a minimum of seven members sitting the bride in the centre and all others dancing around her, obviously without musical instruments, but with rhythmic movements and clapping.

Pathiri	: Rice-cake- a Mappila food speciality
Palli	: A mosque
Pandikasala	: A warehouse; An Emporium for storage.
Pattemar	: Small ship made out of wood mainly
Shariah	: Islamic law based on Quran
Suppara	: A decorative round sheet made of palm leaf used for the purpose of spreading dinner sets in the course of dining.
Tali	: A neck ornament tied as a marriage badge
Talikettu	: Tali Tying system, the most solemn ceremony in a marriage
Tarawad (Taravad)	: A large joint family in Kerala often managed by an elderly person associated with matrilineal system.
Thattam	: A scarf, a single piece head dress of a Mappila Muslim woman.
Tawazhi	: The branch of a matrilineal family; lineage.
Tazhikakudam	: Pinnacle
Tina/Thana	: A raised platform made of laterite (rarely with wood) in the entrance hall used for sitting and for group dining and group recitations of 'Montid' etc.
Tookkuvilakku	: A hanging lamp, equivalent to a <i>Nilavilakku</i> with a chain for hanging.
Vala	: A bangle as in <i>Parangivala</i> , <i>Kannadi vala</i> etc.
Vaatil Matam	: Patippura, Gateway
Zenana	: Apartments in which women are having a secluded life, corresponding to the harem in Muslim palaces.

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THE KEYIS OF MALABAR

a cultural study

Dr. K.K.N.KURUP
Prof. E. ISMAIL

The study of the Keyis of Malabar is a rich academic experience for the scholars who engage in the study of merchant capitalism in the formative years or the British Power in Malabar. It gives a model of how a traditional house transforms into a rich and aristocratic family of traders in association with the colonial power like the English but at the same time reluctant to accept the new trends of changes available before them for further expanse and to face fresh challenges. No doubt that the Keyis came to prominence in Malabar by their industry and ingenuity. Integrity of character and humility of approach endeared them to their benefactors and their dependants. They were proud but not snobish, religious but not intolerant, conservative but not obscurantist. They were always dignified but were never haughty and it is this tradition of nobility and adherence to discipline that accorded them in a place of honour and recognition in a plurastic society as that of Malabar.

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